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# COMMUNITY COLLEGE PATHWAYS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY WITH ONE STUDENT

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE PATHWAYS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY WITH ONE STUDENT

by

Philip M. Ross

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

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(Teaching, Curriculum and Learning)

Under the Supervision of Professor Susan Wunder

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# COMMUNITY COLLEGE PATHWAYS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY WITH ONE STUDENT

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University of Nebraska, 2013

Advisor: Susan Wunder

Developmental education is a field that has a long history in higher education in the United States. Some have called it remedial education, but the field promotes a pedagogy that addresses what it claims is broader in the development of the whole person, his or her cognitive, social/behavioral, and vocational growth. This study, set in a Midwestern community college, acknowledges the absence of recognition of the role of developmental education in higher education and responds to a lack of qualitative research in this area. A six-month study using narrative inquiry results in the documentary *Crossroads Community College: Flying Solo* and following research emphasize the importance of informal interviewing and the value of a student's voice to illuminate experience in an educational institution. This context provides the foreground for the practitioner researcher to come into relationship with the research participant and an understanding of the difficult path one person faces on an uphill path he hopes will lead to college success. By looking at the story and the meanings made through and with the accompanying inquiry, a model for teachers to collaborate in the effort to liberate these voices and build capacity to teach in this field is an important part of this study, which is connected to ancient concepts of education as *Bildung* and *Currere*. This is perhaps ironic because as an effort to erase these seemingly faceless students from higher education grows, this study attempts to honor the subject that is the person, or research participant. This work attempts to make practical philosophy a mode of living that enables praxis, a capacity to transform oneself in light of

experience. This is praxis that understands conduct within and without the classroom must be evaluated on more than efficacy or efficiency but also in terms of moral and social actions.



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## Chapter 1

### A Past Unexplored: Developmental Education

Developmental education is often reduced to its most basic and easiest definition: remediation. Reducing any object, concept, or human being to its simplest form seems commonplace, especially today amidst waves of information. Who has time to look closely, especially at one issue of a historically and politically complex nature which involves millions of college students, billions of dollars, and has become part of a nation's educational agenda?

Chickering (1969) can be an introductory reference as his work is among the most widely cited in regard to theoretical foundations of developmental education. Chickering's seven vectors of college student development delve beyond "developing competence" in subject matter, which may or may not be remedial, to include a broad and deep consideration of human development (as cited in Higbee, n.d.):

- managing emotions
- moving through autonomy toward interdependence
- developing mature interpersonal relationships
- establishing identity
- developing purpose
- developing integrity

In essence, developmental education is "any experience that helps students define 'who I am', 'who I am not' (Reisser, 1995, p. 509) in relationship to themselves, other students, and

curriculum. While Chickering's framework has been considered by some educators for 44 years, developmental education (DE) in some form has been around for much of the history of formal education in the United States. Ironically, while DE's focus is on attention to the growth of the individual, particularly of those who may not have had many educational opportunities at school, home, or community, historian David Arendale (2002) claims that the topic is largely ignored by scholars despite its long and sizable role in U.S. postsecondary education. He found one chapter in the history of post-secondary education that provided an accounting of the role of developmental education, provided by the University of Wisconsin when as early as 1865 a pattern continued since the institution was established 20 years prior. Arendale's (2002) research finds then that at Wisconsin 290 of the 331 students were enrolled in college preparatory coursework, so only 41 students were actually engaged in college-level work. In 1894, it was estimated that 40 percent of students nationwide were enrolled in college preparatory courses at college and 80 percent of colleges and universities provided developmental education. In 1907, roughly half of Ivy League students were claimed to have failed their college entrance exams.

A review of this component of higher education suggests that many students throughout American history have been involved with different academic activities related to developmental education and learning assistance. . . . At times developmental education programs involved nearly half the number of students than those enrolled in official graduation-credit bearing college-level courses. Sometimes the number in developmental education exceeded the other group (Arendale, 2002, p. 4).

More interesting are the ideas Arendale (2002) raises as to why the research historians have consciously or unconsciously ignored the space developmental education has occupied in the nation's history. One reason is that historians have placed a higher priority "on traditional



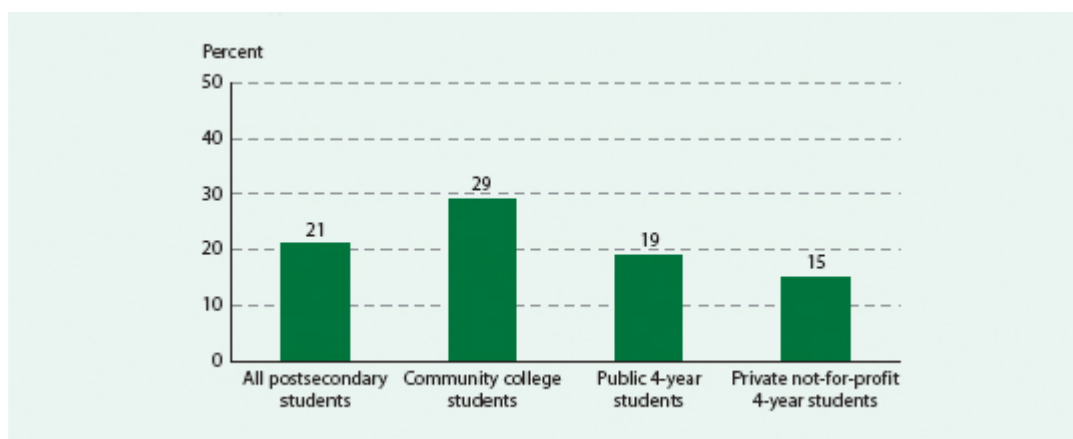
topics and histories of the majority white male class and not those of women, students of color, and those of deprived academic and economic backgrounds” (p. 8) who often comprise most of the students needing developmental education. Along with this idea is that developmental education is a metaphorical “road apple” in the history of postsecondary education, an unsightly blemish on our social and political history that includes injustices and that most, with collective memory or “heritage amnesia,” would choose to forget. I also suggest a reason related to the “road apple” perspective of developmental education and where most of DE is occurring: the stigma of community colleges as well as the scholarship conducted there. In a survey of about 300 articles, the body of scholarship conducted by community college faculty has been criticized roundly by at least a pair of researchers (Safarik & Getskow, 1997) who attack faculty as having “parochial” natures whose “contribution to the literature is a symptom of an overriding and pervasive lack of professionalism” (p. 71) ill-informed by research and theory and therefore detached and unlikely to impact policy beyond its institution. This broad rebuff of scholarship in community colleges, while unique in my research on the topic, is one explicit slam at attempts to tell the story of community college work and may, I suggest, be a rare blast but part of a much larger implicit silencing or purposeful neglect of an area of scholarship, like community college developmental education that Arendale has illustrated.

This history--or lack thereof--of developmental education not only provides a broader context for an introduction to this study but is an insight into the root of this inquiry. Not only is it indicated that educational historians have neglected developmental education and its enduring role in the country, I suggest that the reason I had never heard of developmental education (DE) ten years before leaving my high school classroom and accepting a DE teaching position in a community college's English department is because, like its students, the field and its work is

marginalized. We--researchers, educators, and the broader citizenry--are still choosing not to look. Most people in education I talk with about the DE field are, like I was, oblivious to developmental education, and yet like in the past, DE is still a large phenomenon in post-secondary education in the United States.

While some researchers (Bailey, 2009) cite data that claim as many as 60% of incoming college students are referred to developmental coursework, most data points to the number being closer to 30% of students who actually took at least one remedial course (Boylan, 1995, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008). See Figure A.

FIGURE A: Percentage of beginning postsecondary students who reported taking remedial courses in their first year, by control and type of institution: 2003–04.



NOTE: Data reflect self-reported remedial courses. These data include students enrolled at postsecondary institutions in Puerto Rico.

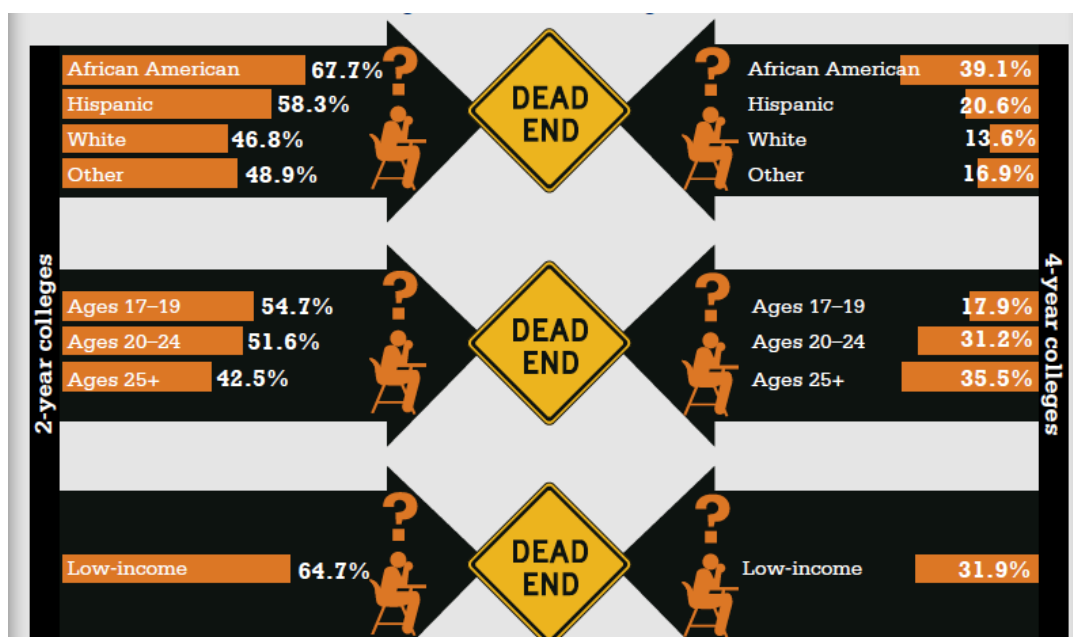
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003/04

Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, First Follow-up (BPS:04/06)

<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/analysis/2008-sa02h.asp>

Among the students who are required to take DE courses, which may mean as many as several semesters and seven courses in math, reading, and writing, those most likely to need these basic academic skills are those students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and those from minority race and ethnicities. See Figure B.

FIGURE B: Percentage of students who need developmental education.



Note. From “Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere.” 2012, p. 6. Copyright 2012 by Complete College America. Reprinted with permission.

As of 2009-2010, my community college assessment center recorded 39.4% of students who took the Computer-Adaptive Placement Assessment and Support System (COMPASS)

placement test needed DE writing, 37.3% needed DE math, and 23.3% needed DE reading before being deemed "college ready." A majority of such students, nationally speaking, are high school graduates (Bailey, 2010). What this data, as well as the figure above and Arendale's history, underscore is that students who need DE are a continuing phenomenon. What is just as significant is that more students are seeking enrollment in post-secondary institutions as the nation's goal, set by President Obama, is to increase the number of community college graduates by 5 million by 2020. Overall, degree-granting institution enrollment increased by 11 percent between 1990 and 2000 and 37 percent from 15.3 million to 21.0 million (<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>). The cost involved is catching the interest of conservative groups. More than \$3 billion is said to be spent each year by students and states to provide DE academic supports for 1.7 million students (Complete College America, 2011) at 75% of U.S. colleges and universities (Boylan, 1995). Critics claim that investments in DE are not yielding results. CCA's "Higher Education's Bridge To Nowhere" (2011) states that fewer than 1 in 10 students who take DE courses graduate from community colleges within three years and a little more than a third graduate from four-year schools in six years and arrive at the conclusion that developmental education in the United States is "a dead end" (Complete College America, p. 8). A sample of other criticism follows:

- “Developmental education is one of the main challenges to improving completion at community colleges” (Whissemore, 2010, para. 1)
- “More than 2 million U.S. college students this fall will be spending a good bit of their time reviewing what they were supposed to learn in high school or even earlier. . . . Colleges aren't geared to teaching secondary education to marginal students” (Vedder, 2012, para. 1)

- "The picture of past and current developmental education appears bleak" (Bailey, 2010, p. 51)

This brief introduction to developmental education represents a national landscape and history that indicate a broad and complex discipline, which I suggest should be centered on the individual, the student. The bullet sentences above suggest that critiques lack an ability or desire to see the individual and the specific contexts in which the student, the community college student in particular, is working, living, raising his or her children, and going to school. In fact, a sense of derision and blame for the individuals can be felt in the language used. At the same time, a consideration of the history of this education has been largely neglected. Now there is sudden concern for developmental education being too costly and ineffective and a threat of eliminating DE in its many forms and improvement initiatives. Yet, while I have been proposing a critique of my own, suggesting a profane vision of developmental education in its lacking history and its present criticism, I cannot lay claim to not sensing a plank of wood in my own eye as an instructor and now researcher in the field. My critique acknowledges my own blindness to individuals who enter my classroom. Arendale (2002) makes another suggestion as to why historians have neglected to explore developmental education: they were never developmental students. Here is the "otherness" that most teachers face in these classrooms with students of lower socioeconomic status who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Not just diverse: They are different and in these differences rest a social, political, economic, and historical gap in understanding that resists easy reorientations.

Here is a persistent inability to see, and now as I teach developmental education classes I recognize that I do not know who these students are. Whereas Arendale's discussion is related to a neglected part of educational history that has been sustained over centuries and included

perennial questions like What is the purpose of postsecondary education? Who should attend college? What should the curriculum look like?, I am driven first to explore Who are the people in my class? and What is their experience? as I acknowledge my own oversights and gaps in what I may understand about these students. Subsidiary questions include What is the curriculum and is there a “good”, ethically speaking? and In what ways do these classes connect or disconnect socially and curricularly to developing literacy among underprepared students? While my pursuit is personal and professional, the work in answering my questions appears to be distinct questions others who concern themselves with post-secondary education may need to be asking as well.

## Chapter 2

### A Present Misunderstood: Developmental Education

We all carry worlds in our heads, and those worlds are decidedly different. We educators set out to teach, but how can we reach the worlds of others when we don't even know they exist? Indeed, many of us don't even realize that our own worlds exist only in our heads and in the cultural institutions we have built to support them. (Delpit, 2006, p. xxiv)

What I begin to face, first and foremost, more intensely than I ever have in my experiences in the developmental classroom is that “multiculturalism” is a concept that oversimplifies my desire to know my students and to see them as individuals. I am struck by what I sense is true in that human beings are never “frozen in a particular pattern” (Varenne & McDermott, 1998, p.9) in the sense that “every person has but one true or legitimate culture ... based on lines of descent, and that the claim is about the ownership of a culture by its members.” My awareness of this in my own experiences had not been realized. People are, of course, more complex than the cultural inheritance suggests. Identities are shaped in social contexts by factors much stronger than just culture and race. Experiencing this as a result of sustained narrative inquiry with those who are “other” than I is what I believe can draw me closer to who my students are and who I am as a community college developmental English teacher and human being. The worlds inside our heads are not just different; the topography and what lies below is more complex. Gaining entry to short but sustained exchanges from this world, I imagine, could

allow me to face some of my assumptions about what I think my student's world might be and reconsider what I thought of the approaches students might be making with curriculum.

This space for listening and questioning is one call and obligation I hear as I face what Ladson-Billings (2006) frames as “educational debt” and what I propose is a resulting cultural gap between those franchised in educational institutions and those who have been denied membership. In her 2006 presidential address to the American Educational Research Association, Ladson-Billings presents a compelling and daunting challenge to researchers that for me, as a practitioner, resonates with my own classroom challenges creating adult college curriculum for students with whose experiences I share little in common as well as painting a larger context of the troubled and maybe even truer landscape of education in this country. The debt’s power is in its societal scope and historic and political depth and contrasts what most knee-jerk, the sky is falling rhetoric de jour serves to political initiatives and media appetites. Understanding the achievement gap as a deficit also, ultimately, lends itself to drawing on other strong voices of research, theory, and practice that can impact relationships in our educational contexts today.

Ladson-Billings’ address takes issue with the narrow and quite popular phrase, “achievement gap,” which at the time yielded millions of citations on Google. The fact that there is a gap is significant, but its yearly measurement hides the underlying depth of what lurks below. A quick look at Ladson-Billings’ data shows a narrowing yet persistent overall 26-point gap between K-12 white and black students on a 0-500 scale on math and reading. The K-12 gap could be measured as well in drop-out rates, enrollment in advanced placement and honors courses, and placement in colleges and professional programs (Ladson-Billings, 2006).



A recent informal survey I conducted at my school showed that 21% of the 75 students in the fall 2011 class, Language Skills/ENGL0845, survived the three developmental English class sequence and then passed Composition I/ENGL100. Among 179 students placed two classes below Composition I in the winter 2011 term, just 36 percent passed the university level English course. And 37 percent of 383 students placed one class below ended up passing Composition I. These figures closely reflect national statistics reported by Complete College America (2011): 22 percent, 36 percent, and 44 percent. National statistics for students who need at least one developmental course show students reaching degree completion range from 9 to 20 percent.

In the past 15 years, different researchers have pointed to various influences on the achievement gap. Multicultural and curriculum theorists have underscored the nature of curriculum and the school environment; teacher educators have explored pedagogical practices of teachers as influential. Ladson-Billings (2006) points out that some research already shows that student behavior and youth culture, socioeconomic conditions and family backgrounds, and school conditions and practices do not fully explain the gap. Rather, Ladson-Billings introduces and explores the idea of a deeply-rooted set of factors in U.S. society that support the Achievement Gap--historical, sociopolitical, economical, and moral—that have become more of the Super Bug of educational viruses that has evolved and grown ever-resistant to easy antidotes.

One report by Hamann and Reeves (2008) specifically looks at the achievement gap in California and considers the instructional practices that had an impact on historic achievement debts. Teachers' lack of content knowledge and instructional strategies as well as a misunderstanding of the importance of "attending to cultivating a trusting relationship of patient, high expectation" (p. 29) are pointed out as stumbling blocks to broader strides to addressing the debt. As well, teachers may know what to do but do not possess the means to act.

Regarding the Achievement Gap (Ladsdon-Billings, 2006) and growing awareness of a correlation between my observations of my students' lives, I find myself increasingly being told what to teach (uniform texts) and what assessments to give at my college. As well, a national movement (Complete College America, 2012) calls for the elimination of developmental education. As if teaching isn't already a life-encompassing task, a calling, a moral and ethical journey rife with challenges many willingly accept with deep satisfaction, the contemporary climate for teaching demands a staking out of one's own journey to explore one's position and relation to the individual student, to enter into the cultural gap reflected in the perennial achievement gap and more insightfully, the education deficit compounded over centuries. Recognizing this place is only a view from the shore of a continent, expansive and rarely recognized. Moving deeper presents greater challenges. Articulating this for the first time, I essentially pointed at myself and confessed after 17 years of teaching, "I don't know anything" in a class of much younger master's students. It was a start.

Loughran (2006) begins his chapter on "Principles of Practice" in *Developing a Pedagogy of Teacher Education* with the "living contradiction" between teacher behaviors and actions with beliefs. Teachers need to align their beliefs and practices. Hamann and Reeves (2008) have noted how teachers—who may believe in principle to providing a quality of education for all—interact differently with students in ways that affect practice. Their review of studies shows several critical observations of teacher practice:

- Teachers made less eye contact with low achievers when they did call on them and offered low achievers less time to respond;

- Teachers praised low achievers less than high achievers in instances when students were unsure of the answer;
- Teachers criticized low-achievers more than high achievers for making inaccurate responses;
- Teachers provided fewer details and less precise feedback to low-achievers;
- Teachers demanded less homework and less precise effort from low-achievers. (p. 10)

The disconnect between wanting to teach all students and actually doing it is real, assuming that teachers do pursue this objective. But the above observations point to the painful fact that low-achievers have less access to quality education and “[t]eachers build different relationships using different interaction strategies and different amounts of those strategies” with different students perhaps because, in part, teachers “absorb cues about who they are working with and filter those cues through previous experience and understandings” (Hamann & Reeves, 2008, p. 11). This underscores the social nature of teaching and learning: it is human interaction.

“If teaching and learning are to be closely aligned, if a genuine pedagogical relationship is to exist between teacher and student(s), then an understanding of the needs and concerns of each is important” (Loughran, 2006, p. 88). Paley (2000) writes in *White Teacher* about how sensitive students are to how a teacher sees them and will begin to respond to that. Students will instinctively know your feelings, whether or not you speak them. “Each child wants to know immediately if he is a worthy person in your eyes. You cannot pretend, because the child knows all the things about himself that worry him” (p. 28).

I do not believe most teachers pretend consciously or desire to deceive students. I believe they—and I include myself as it is my profession—that they do not know how to relate and/or

change and such behaviors are deeply embedded in beliefs that are extremely difficult to alter, as Pajares (1992) examines:

- Beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate and persevere despite contradictions
- Belief systems are acquired through a process of cultural transmission.
- Some beliefs are more incontrovertible than others.
- The earlier a belief is incorporated into a belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter.
- Belief change during adulthood is rare, the most common cause being a conversion from one authority to another or a gestalt shift.
- Individuals' beliefs strongly affect their behavior. (pp. 325-326)

Aforementioned studies and reviews of research indicate two prominent suggestions: teachers tend to not teach well to low-achievers, and change is very difficult. I've made these observations about myself teaching high school and adults: I tend to look and speak to students whom I perceive as more open to my message. It's more natural or easier to teach to those who look, speak, and act like yourself. It may be what we could call the default setting in our cultural and biological orientations. This may also be what describes the "demographic divide" between most teachers and the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD). Teachers in this country are largely different than many of their students, and this difference largely characterizes the socio-economic and ethnic and racial features in the Achievement Gap, which marks the persistent challenge of our K-16 educational systems' failures to reach and teach all students. As outlined

in the first chapter, this gap can be viewed in the college student population deemed "unprepared" and "marginal" who are diverted to developmental education.

I return to the not uncommon idea, but perhaps underappreciated and little understood idea, that teaching is social, inter-relational and its problems in the classroom are largely going to resist systems and organizational change. It is about individuals—teacher and student—and the onus lies on the teacher, instructor, or professor; I am speaking to P-16 settings. The Achievement Gap happens birth-to-life in this country.

Unfortunately, what systems changes have been put in place have often worsened the climate for the individual, again teacher and student. My admission is that I am just as concerned with the teacher as the student because I am both and I also believe the well-being of both are closely connected if not dependent. I also believe that part of my goal is to push the life of the teacher into an explicit role in the concept of the care and upbringing of the student; in fact, the upbringing of the student from childhood *through* adulthood is that journey of a teacher that continues to evolve, not a life that becomes static and considered already fulfilled, although this is a common assumption. Or even if they're not thought of as scholars and fully matured humans, it's pretty much too late: Teaching life is a life given for students. Teachers, however bright and knowledgeable of content, let's face it, have to be inquirers.

This is my "problem of practice": the life of the teacher and his or her ability to see the student; this requires continued evolution through experience. I look at this problem and propose to contribute to its understanding a single approach that does not mean to suggest itself as the answer or even one of the answers but a way to examine our experience and learn more about one's self in relation to others. This view asks teachers to develop a vision of students that allows for an expanded understanding of the 'other.' That is, teachers must change despite or because of

how difficult it is, regardless of how good of a teacher he or she is with some students. Change here may be considered openness to experience of the other, an evolving recognition that allows for re-attunement to individuals.

Higbee (2005) recognizes the lack of qualitative research on developmental education since there is very little beyond quantitative studies. “It is critical that developmental educators attend to the lived experiences of their students and focus on affective and cultural aspects of learning, not just on the cognitive domain” (p. 7). She claims the benefits of qualitative methods “can illuminate the multiple and shifting realities of students in transition” while “demonstrating the richness and overlapping variety of both developmental and nondevelopmental students’ experiences” (p. 12). Qualitative research can answer to “a lack of knowledge about the real lives of students and the realities of developmental education” and “allow educators to explore more meaningfully the complexity of students’ multicultural issues in developmental programs” (p. 12-13).

Higbee’s request makes a palatable call for study of student lives. Ladson-Billings (2006) reframes the persistent achievement gap in K-12 education as an “education debt,” further complicating solutions to a gap in scores by connecting it to a past deeply rooted in centuries of socio-political, historical, economic, and moral inequities among minorities. Her concept of educational debt takes special consideration of minority struggles in this country and the influx of immigrants into the United States in the last 30 years. Delpit (1988) called out education purpose, writing that schooling that reflects liberal, middle-class values and aspirations will only “ensure the maintenance of the status quo,” ensuring that power, the culture of power, remains with those who already possess it (p. 285). While many schools boast innovations in programs to accommodate the shifting student population, Olsen (1997), in her seminal study of immigrant

populations, claims that much of what is being done is “a veneer of unity and the promises of diversity” that do not affect real response to change (p. 10). Educators often claim a belief in integration, fairness, and equal opportunity, and say they enjoy a diverse community, but what “they collude in not seeing is the active process of exclusion and sorting that goes on in the school’s program and practice, a sorting that consigns students by skin color, class, and English fluency” (p. 11). At the high school of her study, Olsen sees “all the pain and shame of racism and exclusion that have run deep in this nation for centuries . . . Do we really want to perpetuate a system of racial separation and racism, of monoculturalism and conformity?” (pp. 11-12)

Erickson (1987) points to an “invisible hand” of hegemony that “frame school experience of students who are members of stigmatized social groups” (p. 352). These are practices that work in concert with the interests and cultural assumptions of the dominant group and therefore maintain existing power relationships. Kemmis and Smith (2008) use different terms to describe how particular settings like classrooms come with “bundled arrangements that pre-determine sayings, doings and relatings” that shape what people think and say and how they relate to one another by way of tradition (p. 268). Hull (1991) considers the connection of such tradition to the influence of “deficit notions” on how teachers in community colleges teach writing. Hull (1991) witnesses a shift in teacher thinking in her study and others as teachers leap from perceptions of a lack of student experience in a task to claiming students’ inability to cognitively perform tasks. She challenges researchers and teachers to question unarticulated assumptions and cultural biases “that have been part of educational thought for a long time” (p. 315-316). This recalls Shaughnessy’s (1977) suggestion that teachers reach a point in their understanding that they open themselves to learning from their students, where they “remediate” themselves about their students’ “difficulties and incipient excellence” (p. 239)

## Seeing the Other

Ayers (2010) claims if the seer is not truly seeing and therefore not seen either, there is a blindness, a “profane vision,” that reduces the observed into objects for use. A teacher who gives his passion, shares his lessons, who is kind and patient . . . what could be possibly profane or objectifying about his or her work? I’ve touched on my own suspicions about myself, but Mayo (2004) contends that “a suspicion that one does not know as much as one thinks one knows allows one to remain more open to the possibility of difficult relations. Further, a suspicion about one's ignorance can be a motivation to form relations that keep one grappling with one's understanding of the world” (pp. 125-6).

Therefore, to view yourself, as a teacher, through your students’ eyes and to see the curriculum through your students’ eyes is more challenging as well. Planning lessons that engage the “other” and responding to students in the midst of experience is an imaginative challenge that requires deep understandings of humans, developmentally, cognitively, and culturally.

If teaching as being is a moral act invoking an ethic of care (Loughran, 2006), it is also a political act and makes it imperative for the teacher to seek change despite the new tensions and discomfort it might make vulnerable. On his journey, Howard (1999) abandoned his missionary view of teaching and became a subversive. The moral obligation does not always necessitate that, not in the ideas I propose, but certainly a push back against forces that ask teachers to narrow our view of teaching and practice vis-a-vis abundant testing and assigned or prescribed



“teacher proof” curriculum that emphasize efficiency over practice that seek the health and happiness of the whole human being.

Inquiry designed for narrative construction could help students and ourselves as teachers expand awareness of other worlds that allow for the past, the present, one's inner self, and the other to negotiate experiences with curriculum.

### **Finding the New Story**

He and Phillion (2004) describe using literary-based narratives to help prepare teachers to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations. With little multicultural experience and little awareness of issues of injustice, many teachers face difficulties stepping outside of their own lives and understanding how those who are different than they experience the world. Citing Darling-Hammond and others (2002), He and Phillion (2004) claim that those who enter the story of another's experience can reach a “break point” where one can “begin to connect issues with their own lives and to engage in discussions openly” (p. 4), and begin to “develop empathy and vision that will help them truly ‘see’ their students, the skills to address their learning needs, and the commitment to keep working for students when obstacles are encountered” (p. 4). While one method is to use literary texts to help develop an imaginative capacity to relate to those different than themselves, I suggest that teachers build time to listen to a student in a narrative inquiry that seeks to answer at least these questions: How does my student experience the world both inside and outside school and classroom? and How do I see myself in her story? This process requires the kind of self-examination or reflection that asks one to step out of our comfort zone, or “white encapsulation” (Howard, 1999) and challenge assumptions and question taken-for-granted truths (He, 2004). To draw on narrative inquiry theorists Clandinin & Connelly (1994), personal experience methods can be used to answer to

the educational debt by exploring and thereby sharing in the story of our students and thus honoring that life. By permitting ourselves to “enter into and participate with the social world in ways that allow the possibility of transformations and growth” we can “create a middle ground where there is a conversation among people with different life experiences” (p. 425).

A critical piece of narrative inquiry for a teacher is to provide all participants with voice within the relationship. This isn't research that is taken but rather a sharing and co-creation. Elbow (1986) calls this part of the process the “believing game,” which requires affirming the other's voice and the “entering into someone's thinking or perceiving” (p. 289). Teachers committed to narrative research in collaboration with students can grow awareness of the cultural gap that the educational debt has demonstrated. This is only a radical concept in that its timing comes as a departure from unparalleled emphasis on policy mandates for efficiency and the reductionist paradigm of students and their test scores as being the paramount of identity in the institution of education.

### **Narrative Inquiry into Self/Other Relations**

Who is the ‘Other’ and what is to be done in respect to him or her depends on who I think the Other is and who I am in relation to them. A move toward exploring this question will involve leaning on socio-cultural underpinnings that insist on knowing oneself in relation to others. Understanding myself as a teacher and human being depends on interactions with others. If these interactions only exist within the context of a classroom for a fraction of a day, little can be learned in terms of the potential of waking to the story of the student. A longer, more committed pursuit, as pedagogical action, means “having our work and action ever more finely tuned to the realities of the world” (Smith, 1996, p. 8).

The game of separating self and other is one of which I am aware, but I want to abandon such dualistic thinking for research that yields to openness to face myself and others as sharing in a common reality. Or at least make that part of the goal of my own research. Such research leans on narrative inquiry that utilizes field techniques of interviewing, observing, reflecting, and collaborating, but it is also informed by hermeneutics. The latter implicates myself as a researcher in what I am trying to understand and the creation of meaning.

This is aesthetic work that is writing and conversation, co-creating what the participants have asked to make. Ethical issues can and should be raised, often associated with qualitative work with participants regarding power relations, voice, and others. Questions of credibility, validity, “naïve gazing,” and Knowledge that can be shared with others are also concerns with this kind of work.

However, this study attempts to move from narrative inquiry as theorists position the researcher as the one who collects, tells, and writes the stories. This study uses sustained collaboration in the effort of story to build relations that seek a method of democracy that relates to pragmatic philosophy. In this sense, the method forefronts transactions among participants in an active, balanced relation between co-researchers and text that brings together a complex mix of personal, textual, and contextual elements in an experience of making meaning that can be called a methodology of connection.

This balanced collaboration is an embodied process of experimentation and inquiry that Dewey (1975) called parties in life-transactions. This connects to the back and forth of dialogue that helps one perceive the other and aids in the expansion of self, as Gadamer (1975) discusses a “fusing of horizons” that lead to a broader vision, a transposing of self with another.

This is dialectic process where the researcher and collaborator both have stories and there is an interacting and a generating of new stories and meanings evolving from questioning. This methodology of connection insists on space that engenders opportunity to become aware of differences and connections. It is a learning experience that involves reaching out in a playful space and is open to the possibilities of another. As executed and theorized here, it is also locally embedded in a school with and by a teacher--myself--and a student. This is practitioner inquiry influenced by an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) shaped by the culture of a community college and its community. As such, research here is counter-hegemonic for many reasons in its methodological design and perhaps therein its promise. It proposes:

- qualitative research has an important role in what is considered data
- teachers can and should speak to local practice and broader theory and policy, not just be recipients of others' research
- the voice of one student can and should complicate conversations of teaching and policy
- policy, practice, and curriculum are only accountable for an individual's educational performance when they consider broad cultural and social considerations
- the development of relations with one student can be a touchstone experience that leads to uncommon openness
- if a study strives for a democratic methodology that promises a democratizing impact, it questions power-holders' and decision-makers' roles

If the method and promise is rooted in a counter-hegemonic stance, the foundations and emerging picture of what its operation looks like needs closer scrutiny.

## **Experience of I-Thou Openness**

This inquiry is rooted in a practical philosophy that connects understanding to the experience and is careful as to what generalizations are beyond building experience and suggesting a similar approach that can lead to improved practice, such that is what Gadamer (1975) calls the “vocation of man” to be discerning and insightful (p. 350). In other words, as Risser (1997) explains, this method begets no absolute knowing or measured advancement, but in “the dialectic of experience [that] has at its proper fulfillment not in definitive knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself” (p. 91). The orientation for this discussion draws, in part, on Risser’s (1997) explanation of Buber’s I-Thou relation that is dialogic and participatory wherein the Thou is not an “it” but a subject-to-subject relation characterized by involvement, mutuality, openness and a presentness that recalls Gadamer’s “genuine partner in dialogue” (1975, p. 92). Each participant belongs in the conversation without a flattening of experience that scientific method can yield and that can conceal attempts to dominate the experience or its outcome. Gadamer’s (1975) genuine form of experience recognizes the Thou as the other in genuine openness:

In human relations the important thing is, as we have seen, to experience the Thou truly as a Thou—i.e., . . . to let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs. But ultimately this openness does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather, anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without such openness to one another

there is no genuine human bond. Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another. . . . Openness to the other, then, involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so. (p. 355)

This openness goes beyond liberal-mindedness, Risser (1997) explains, to what is alien and other. “It is to face what refuses my framework” (p. 94). Hermeneutic consciousness rejects “methodological sureness of itself, but in the same readiness for experience that distinguishes the experienced individual from the individual captivated by dogma. Therefore, a “hermeneutic experience is the encounter with the voice of the other. And the openness to experience, as the willingness to listen, means accordingly not to consume and assimilate the other but to suffer what is beyond oneself” (Risser, 1997, p. 94).

This inquiry rationale offers a method that does not serve an objective that produces scientific knowledge, but it is an accounting of experience that holds within itself a conception of knowledge that is independent of methodological procedure of modern science. This means that the philosophical hermeneutic underpinnings of the inquiry should speak “to the conditions of our moral and social practice in such a way that it is to be seen as a corrective to the inappropriate extension of modern methodological science to the conditions of social life” (Risser, 1997, p. 106). As such, understanding is not a recreation of any original “data” or its arrangement on a page but a new understanding.

Nor is philosophy a transcendental operation in pursuit of principles but a joining of reason to the practice of life that Rorty (1975) explains is a Socratic “willingness to talk, to listen to other people, to weigh the consequences of our actions upon other people” (p. 172). In this

way, knowledge and philosophy are changed from contemplative to operative. This is method that invokes the ongoing work that is a “social hope, that is, of giving mankind the opportunity to grow up. In this context the will to truth is transformed into the urge to create. . . . And, consistent with the makings and doings towards human community, it is a performance for which there are no determinate rules given in advance” (Risser, p. 115).

### **Narrative within Hermeneutic Experience**

There are diverse and expansive interpretations of narrative inquiry, but we can accept that it is a discourse of articulated personal meaning or as Bruner (1996) suggests, stories and their interpretations that “traffic in meaning” where meanings are multiple (p. 90). As such, narrative itself beyond polysemy is a *mode of being* that narrative researchers claim has a structure of organizing knowledge which suggests a method to the work of creating an inquiry.

Narrative research refers to any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials. The data can be collected as a story or in a different manner. It can be the object of the research or a means for the study of another question. It may be used for comparison among groups, to learn about social phenomenon or historical period, or to explore a personality.

(Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber, 1998, pp. 2-3)

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain narrative inquiry in terms of relying heavily on Dewey’s (2005) notion of experience related to situation, continuity, and interaction. Using Dewey as a touchstone, Clandinin and Connelly understand that there is much more to say about why a person does what she does just “because of her experience.” Clandinin and Connelly focus on four directions of inquiry: inward and outward, backward and forward. Inward deals with hopes, feelings, among others, and outward deals with the environment; backward and forward

are related to understanding the temporality of experience, that is, the past's role and a connection to a future experience.

Thus, when one is positioned on this two-dimensional space in any particular inquiry, one asks questions, collects field notes, derives interpretations, and writes a research text that addresses both personal and social issues by looking inward and outward, and addresses temporal issues by looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future.

(Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 50)

Perspectives on experience are valuable when observing and analyzing field notes and conversations as interviews but are not complete as they don't seem yet comprehensive enough to include the *other*, or the relational space that provides such strong influences on who the "I" is and the shape a story takes. The invaluable role a researcher plays in embodied discourse and intentionality with co-researchers, and the building of relationship that can become a powerful dynamic between the "I" and the "Thou" is a result of this connection to subject matter. This connection becomes a dynamic for the possibility and potentialities of relationship as part of the narrative. "This means that the question of who we are is inseparable from the question of how we are in relation to others" (Horsdal, 2012, p. 117) and the research of narrative inquiry, and, as I suggest, how we are in relation to authoring story.

Horsdal (2012) recognizes the role of experience in influencing the emerging selves in new encounters. For adult learners who have had challenging backgrounds in education, every step in the institutional experience of schooling can become a radical change that may challenge any positive sense of renewed continuity. Success and a subsequent sense of mastery must take place for a re-configuration of a more optimistic biography. Horsdal recommends providing a transitional space for safe emergence of new stories that allow for making new sense of the



world. Recalling Rossiter, Horsdal says people who are scared because change is threatening their identity “may counteract the risk of a transformed, or destroyed, identity by rigidly maintaining the prior self in the encounter with changing circumstances and thus try to prevent change and resist learning” (p. 145).

The role of the teacher and/or the researcher in co-constructing narratives and conceivably influencing the direction of the narratives is problematic as it concerns appropriation of the ‘other’ rather than the liberation of that voice and one of its opportunities to be understood. We know that not all people have an equal distribution of narrative rights. “Enforced silence is a cultural instrument used in many situations which limits the narrative rights of some people and, in certain cases, cuts people off from a meaningful integration of experience” (Horsdal, p. 32). As part of this silence, I recognize that some educational practices and institutions influence the capacity to promote or prevent domination.

Institutional authority acknowledges unbalanced positions of power that situates narrative research in particular. I claim that narrative inquiry requires personal autonomy that doesn’t just respect the individual from a distance but depends on the connection among participants that is mutual and reciprocal. From the beginning of a research project, negotiating entry into the experience itself is unbalanced in terms of power relations. If one objective is to build Gadamer’s “horizons of understanding”, responsive interactions in a space that allows for the history of authority to fade and participation to become an opening up of participants to the power of what each is saying. Smith (2001) claims that “Such an opening does not entail agreement but rather the to-and-fro play of dialogue” (p. 2). This allows the “interview” as a narrative inquiry technique to become a conversation in “[t]he way one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in

some way, but the partners conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led. No one knows in advance what will come out of conversation” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 385).

Bresler (2006) explains six aspects in the process of perceiving art that helps inform the experience of narrative inquiry: 1. Noticing detail, 2. Seeing relations between parts, 3. Seizing the whole as the whole, 4. The lingering caress, and 5. Mutual absorption. The awareness of these processes can aid in the mutual co-authoring of narrative, much as when there is a joint embarking on a performance of a new musical piece that aids in making sense and coming to know the work and the participants. The first, noticing detail, discourages the glossing over of details, or an awareness of details that suggest slow, careful observation. The second and third aspects, the seeing of relations and seeing the whole, “involves apprehending how every element performs with respect to the whole” and “the completeness and coherence, the grasping of unity in the face of multiplicity” (Bresler, 2006, p. 26).

The fourth and fifth aspects of experiencing art—lingering caress and mutual absorption—“involve a new set of relations between viewer and the visual . . . work” (Bressler, p. 26) that allow for a satisfaction in the “spinning out our engagement” with the text of experience, including the creation of a story. Discoveries are yielded from this process of this commitment and what Armstrong (2000) calls the transformative character of deep engagement: “When we keep our attention fixed upon an object which attracts us, two things tend to happen. We get absorbed in the object and the object gets absorbed into us” (p. 99).

Relating the doing and undergoings of narrative research within this discussion of experiencing art, one must consider the performance and the audience or readers of the work. This is a sixth aspect important in the research even though performance as publishing might be considered a post-research step. Bresler (2006) suggests that performance can unify the actors

(researchers and participants) in the shared experience to become, what I aim for, is a shared expression that will continue beyond any formal terms of research end dates, no more than one can proclaim an end date to any relationship or learning experience.

Together, these elements from visual and musical arts can imbue narrative research in a cyclical and interactive process, rather than one that is hierarchical and linear; they are not stages but aspects of the work. They “involve interplay between part and whole, description and interpretation, tightening one’s focus and widening it” (Bresler, p. 27). For the elements to actually inform the work, the cyclical interactions require time and space not commonly experienced in a series of interviews or observations but require a commitment that is prolonged, such that it allows “us” to “move closer” (Bresler, p. 27). Recalling a hermeneutic circle, intellectual and emotional connections can be gained as well as renewed perceptions and interpretations within the unfolding narrative. The detachment characterizing the tradition of social science research has an opportunity to dissolve within this dialogical and recursive process.

The research aims at a *mutuality* between the *collaborators*, the semblance of redundancy meant to emphasize what I consider a democratic inquiry, set in the process of narrative inquiry and informed by hermeneutic and pragmatic philosophy. In the context of this inquiry, “the researcher’s narrative interacts with the participants’ narratives, generating, in Gadamer’s words, a ‘fusion of horizons’” (Bresler, p. 28) where the engagement in the story—that is, the creation of text that represents the Story of the participant, as well as the story of our creating that text together—gets inside of us, as it is internalized.

## Chapter 3

### Method & Process in Story and Retelling

It bears revisiting that this research claims to provide experience that allows for future openness to further experience for the participant researchers, or the collaborating narrative researchers. This is not a repetition of any story but a new story that interprets a past history and through sustained, frequent conversation and shared writing grows a new story that changes the participants and offers text as the voice and story of one that has potentialities for a new audience to join in this dialogue. Here, as I began with Phillion and He (2004), is an opportunity for further literary imagination and the story and its interpretations continue. “The individual is never merely reproduced but is drawn out of himself toward his own possibilities and is remade by his experience” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 188). Just who this individual is can be the research participant, the practitioner/researcher, and the audience. Adhering to a process and evaluation of this inquiry aims to add credibility and validity to this study. Establishing this study by referencing Creswell's (2012) research process clarifies this narrative inquiry.

#### **Step 1: Identify a phenomenon to explore that addresses an educational problem**

Identifying a central phenomenon that is an issue or concern is primary, although in narrative inquiry the interest is in story. Developmental education and the experience of the individual is the story and the concern. Finding and co-constructing the story of an individual in this setting can speak to the larger concerns of what it means to teach in relation to a student in this setting as well as contribute and complicate the decisions about the direction of developmental education, regarding local and national policy. The nature of this proposition is large and makes it messy. Believing that one story experienced, retold, and retold again sets a

foundation of faith in the richness of voice that can honor the research participant without suggesting the story itself is an answer.

**Step 2: Purposefully select an individual from whom I can learn about the phenomenon**

The research participant is someone “who can provide an understanding of the phenomenon [because he] has experienced a specific issue or situation” (Creswell, 2012, p. 523). More often, narrative inquiry examines the story of one or only a few individuals. This study introduces Greg, a student who is entering Southeast Community College as a developmental reading, writing, and math student. The purposefulness of his selection is that he is enrolled in developmental coursework and that he volunteers for the study.

In this step, negotiating entry into the study for myself as researcher into the research site and into the life of Greg is part of this step. This involves explaining myself to the participant and is to help me clarify the work but also “shapes what is interesting and possible under the field circumstances” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 73). My presence with students like Greg is not uncommon: this is my work space. As an intensive advisor, I meet weekly with students one-on-one in a tutor role and provide support in navigating the academic institution, its culture and bureaucracy. Conversations about managing the academic load and transitioning to college life are experiences that are expected, so I am not needing to negotiate myself as an outsider to the school and its students. Negotiating the collection of our engaged work does need clarification, per the Institutional Review Board proposal and process of consent, for which Greg consented.

**Step 3 & Step 5: Collaborate and collect the story from that individual**

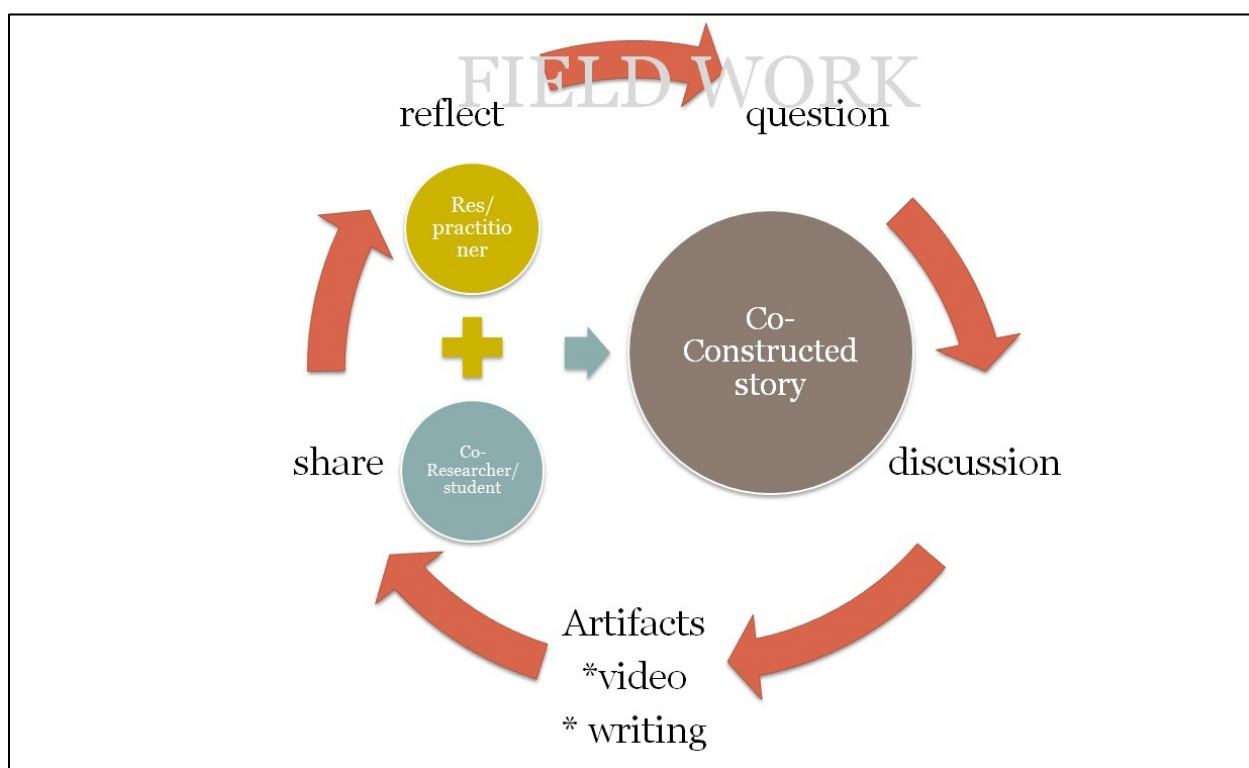
Field texts are gathered in this process. These texts are the data of an individual's experience. The ideal form of field texts is having the research participant tell his experiences through personal conversations or interviews (Creswell, 2012). I record our conversations by digital video recordings. As well, Greg video-records himself in an event I call "video-journaling" where he reflects on events and his thoughts. Other field texts gathered in this study include these:

- Greg's digital blog he writes for class
- Emails and text messages between Greg and me
- Greg's writing compositions for two English classes
- My own video-journal

In the research design, a series of prompts or questions were outlined as interview topics. This formalized process was scrapped for a process that was consistent with similar themes but more responsive to what the events of that day were. Often, the conversation or informal interviews followed what Greg had referenced in his video-journal entries. Prompts for his video-journaling were written by me to explore these references. These prompts were given to Greg during our intensive advising sessions, delivered when he was leaving class, or emailed to him. We had a scheduled time to meet for 30 minutes once a week but Greg, as with other intensive advisees, were encouraged to find me as needed.

The collaboration in this experience runs across all steps (Creswell, 2012). I have included it as part of the collection process because it includes "working closely with the participant to obtain field texts that capture the individual experiences" (p. 525). This collaboration, which is as much to say *participation*, is what I consider Clandinin and Connelly's

“living life on the landscape” where being in the field is “a form of living, a way of life” (2000, p. 78). I suggest as an interpretation of this research experience is a growing awareness of the taken-for-grantedness that one who is not engaged in the research will not see or feel. This is, of course, the ideal and can be equated to my becoming and living in the story or something of a subject or actor in the story. As well, this process is not looking at the research participant, Greg in this study, as an object but in a space that “enfolds us and those with whom we work. Narrative inquiry is a relational inquiry as we work” (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 60) and “makes us vulnerable as inquirers because it makes secret stories public” (p. 62). I will return to this notion of vulnerability in the implications section of this paper.



Here, this process deserves special consideration for the use of video as a narrative tool. Greg was loaned a digital camera of mine and kept it for about 14 weeks. He would drop it off about every week, sometimes two. Haw and Hadfield (2011) liken the use of video to the root

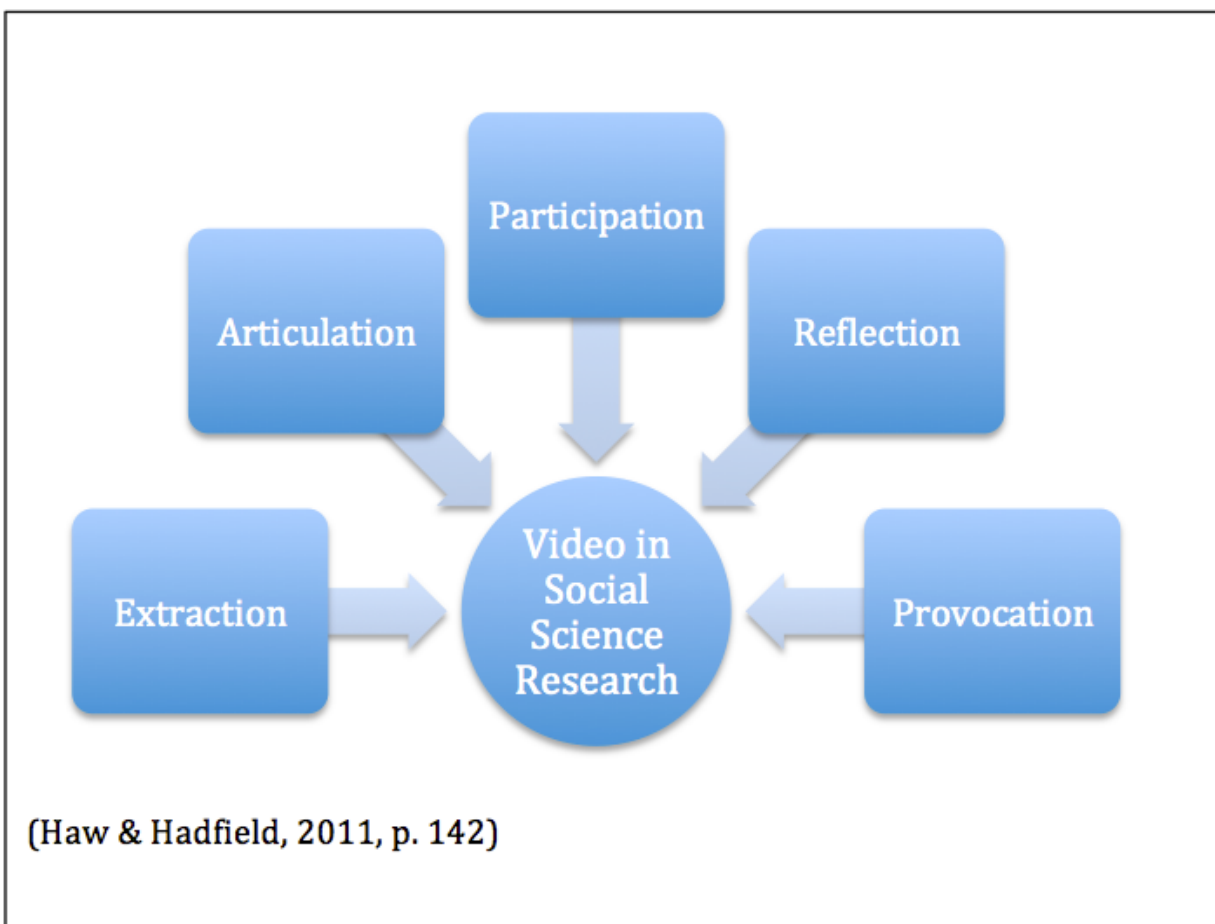
metaphor of the role of video and the articulation of voice to that of a good pop song: the researcher is the record producer, the project is the song and the participant is the recording artist. “A pop song will be remembered because it is ‘catchy’ —a memorable tune that can be interpreted by different people on many levels, because the simplicity and honesty of its lyrics mean that they can be invested with meanings from the deep and mysterious to the more everyday” depending on the listener (p. 113-114). The authors, as I am in support of, claim that the metaphor like the use of video is a cultural expression for marginalized groups, ranging from the political to the highly personal.

Video is an important medium; it is easily transportable, inexpensive and is congruent with many young people’s ‘culture reading’ skills. . . . it can be viewed more often than once, and can reach a potential audience larger than any auditorium maxim capacity. It was important that the medium for this project was video, given that it is a relevant cultural medium for the participants and for the intended audience. (Howard et al., 2002, p. 5 qtd. in Haw & Hadfield, 2011, p. 94)

For Haw and Hadfield’s reasons illustrated by the pop song metaphor and for Howard et al.’s practical explanation of video is a useful choice. My experience with video supports these explanations. I have used video as a learning tool in helping students from many cultures tell their stories, especially starting in 2007 when I worked with students from the tropics at EARTH University in Costa Rica. Many of these students from Africa and Central and South America spoke a different language than I, and they used video as a medium to tell and share their stories with their voices, images, and music. As well, students in developmental English classes have been drawn to similar features of video as a storytelling tool that are at the core of the research design in this study with Greg and in its retelling in *Crossroads Community College: Flying Solo*.



In what is considered completely integrated, video is both creative and investigative research into and of the phenomenon and one in which the story is retold in its production. By its highly participatory design—that is, particularly when Greg is charged with video-journaling himself, he turns the camera on and off, determines the time and place where much of the video is recorded, the angle and distance of the camera even—ethical concerns arise about the parallel design of the project: Is Greg’s control and process parallel to the researcher’s control? In Haw & Hadfield’s (2011) experience, the dimension ranges from participants like Greg being essentially resources of insights, to being co-researchers and being supported/developed as lead researchers. The particular modalities these researchers outline for video in social science research helps clarify the nature of Greg’s video in the process and in its retelling.



From one-line definitions of each modality (Haw & Hadfield, 2011), a discussion can ensue:

- Extraction: using video to record a specific interaction so that it can be studied in more depth by the researcher
- Reflection: using video to support participants to reflect upon their actions, understandings and constructions
- Provocation: using video to provoke participants to critically examine and challenge existing norms, traditions and power structures
- Participation: using video to engage participants in a research project in ways that allow them to shape its focus and outcomes
- Articulation: using video to help participants voice their opinions and communicate these to others

In *Crossroads*, I use video to engage the participant. Handing a video camera to a research participant seemed to be a power-sharing invitation. With a digital camera, one can easily imagine the authorial force one wields. It is an obvious statement but needs to be written: those who are drawn to and comfortable with the camera, like Greg was, are more likely to participate in a study with this kind of design although “like Greg” would be a complicated topic. Besides participation, I sought the use of video to support Greg’s reflections, understandings, and constructions as he experienced community college. Greg, it will be shown, used the camera to do this. However, he also had the opportunity to use the camera for other modalities that I had not fully anticipated, at least to the extent that he did, specifically provocation.

#### **Step 4 & 6: Restory or retell the individual's story/Write a story about the participant's experiences**

In narrative inquiry, the process of reviewing data includes an examination and identification of elements of a story, sequencing the elements, and presenting a retold story that will help an audience understand the story (Creswell, 2012). This is a retelling that requires the researcher to often follow a selection process that mimics something of a literary analysis. A sense of time, place, plot, and scene are located in this retelling as well as a growing complexity as field texts are “read” and reread, coded and re-written and written about. From the field texts I have gathered, this includes about nine hours of video, many pages of my notes, Greg’s writing, and other text-based artifacts like text messages. From this data, a story is retold as a 30-minute video that draws on the field texts. In this retelling, I am aware of the criticisms and challenge of narrative inquiry, such as they center on issues of meaning-making presented as a plotline (Hamilton in Chan, Keyes, Ross, 2012), that narrative researchers “merely sift through stories to identify one that illustrate the answer they desire to assert” (Hamilton, p. xiii). To insure the integrity of the research, the work “requires a steady-handed and thoughtful” process that is rigorous and demands commitment to trustworthiness “to reveal the plotlines and knowledge that is often ambiguous” (p. xi). This approach recalls Schwab’s (1960) fluid inquiry, “a way of thinking in which an inquiry is not clearly governed by theories, methodological tactics, and strategies,” Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 121) explain. In other words, the answers to the questions and to what draws a narrative inquirer to the research is a space that is shifting in its meanings and the work must be open.

### **Step 7: Evaluate & validate the accuracy of the report**

As a starting point, evaluating qualitative research of a narrative inquiry, Creswell (2012, p. 526) poses ten questions: 1) Does my research focus on individual experiences? 2) Is my focus on a single individual or a few individuals? 3) Do I collect the story of an individual's experience? 4) Do I restory the participant's story? 5) In the restorying, is the participant's voice as well as my own heard? 6) Do I, as researcher, identify themes that emerge from the story? 7) Does the story have a temporal, chronological sequence including the past, present, and future? 8) Do I include information about place or setting of the individual? 9) Is there evidence that I collaborate with the Greg, the participant? 10) Does the story adequately address the purpose and questions of mine?

These questions are important to foreground even while some of which I have addressed and others I will. Geertz (1988) contributes the anthropologist's aim on validity as something sensed, "as less to do with facts or conceptual elegance than it has with their capacity to convince us that when they say is a result of their having actually penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly 'been there.' And that, persuading us that this offstage miracle has occurred, is where the writing comes in" (p. 4-5). The highly-situated nature of this work suggests, as Geertz poses, a take-it-or-leave-it quality.

In this research, in many ways I have "been there" with Greg. As previously mentioned, I am a teacher and Greg's intensive advisor in the school for five months. In this sense, I am an insider who has a role to play besides/beyond being a practitioner researcher. I have an office where we met and discussed his English assignments, set goals, and made plans for his advancement through college, such as registering for future classes. However, I am also an outsider in relation to so much of his experience in the greater community and also parts of his

story that came before we met. In this outsider role, as with the audience of the retelling, I rely on the voice of the participant to establish validity. Even if I wanted, I could not change what Greg says. In the design of the research is an inherent “must” that what Greg says and conveys in writing and in what I can observe non-verbally is his truth. In my insider role that requires me to communicate with his English teacher, I have nothing to question in what he conveys. On the other hand, what he sees in me may change what he does express. This drives toward the nature of our relationship in this project, which is central to the validity of the work and what I am exploring in terms of a pedagogy of relations. Nowhere in the field texts and in the retelling do you see how I look at him, but the audience can often see how he’s looking at me and how he talks when he is reflecting alone. However, the positioning and proximity of our bodies can be understood and suggestive of the presence of trust or any degree thereof.

A commonsense understanding of what is meant by voice, as it is Greg who is speaking in the retelling, except for the text, is appropriate here and this review leans on four themes drawn from Haw & Hadfield (2011). One is that “voice privileges experience, over theory or training, as the basis of the understanding of an issue or activity” (p. 114). This “interior authenticity” is the basis of the validity. A second theme is the privileging of those who have been excluded, silenced or subordinated. Thirdly, as the nature of experiences and understanding is often removed from or unique among individuals, “rather than being validated by the warrant of those who are listening to it . . . it becomes the responsibility of the audience to judge the voice on its own terms and not their own” (p. 115). As my first role as a partner in conversation with Greg, I listen the same way I do to any author of a story: I give him the benefit of the doubt; I give him a chance. I listen deeply and believe when the author gives me reason to believe. In the believing is the perception that the author believes in what he is expressing. As I move from

fieldwork to the retelling, questions surface, but in this case, as you will see in the retelling, I believe.

As the research relies on the modality of reflection, what supports the story is the time and space that Greg has. As with anyone who reflects, the “pausing for thought” yields for a searching and a groping for meaning influenced by time.

“The validity of the reflection phase will in part be a function of how much reflection there is in relation to how much experience. Brief and cursory reflection upon deep and extended experience is not likely to yield up much truth-value; similarly with elaborate and prolonged reflection upon a fleeting trace experience.” (Heron qtd. in Haw & Hadfield, p. 54, 2011)

While the research has participatory qualities, the retelling is the result of my own time spent examining and re-examining the field texts. From the variety and abundance of field texts and the experience of participating in some way myself, the research text in the form of a story in video resulted. The discussion in this chapter explores the research design and how it emerged. A closer examination and preview of the video story, *Crossroads Community College: Flying Solo*, will follow.

## Chapter 4

### An Introduction to Greg's Story Retold: Authoring a Story with Metaphor

As an introduction to the video story, *Crossroads Community College: Flying Solo*, I would like to begin where I concluded the previous chapter, particularly concerning voice and now the ethical issue of the co-optation of voice and the question of Who's story is this? Greg's voice is the only one here, or so it may seem, but I claim that there is a more subtle mingling of my voice with Greg's as I have selected and incorporated other information and what I would say are *influences* in the re-telling. These would be data about developmental education and information about his class. Music is also an influence I have included, albeit subtly. The fact that Greg retains his name and identity in the retelling restricts a researcher, myself in this situation, to appropriating his story. His words in his voice, which includes his tone, diction, and pacing, spoken directly to a camera remain his. In ways that a printed text of excerpts of his voice cannot represent, the video of Greg makes an argument that Greg owns his voice and his story.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that the question of ownership be reframed to one that focuses on relational responsibility. Namely, this reframing revolves around "questions of responsibilities to those with whom we are in relation" (p. 177). Greg himself took measures to not mention teachers, friends, and family by name and was therefore sensitive to this relational responsibility. Since my role as his intensive advisor from the outset of our relationship involved the goal of helping Greg succeed in college, I had a responsibility to his success as narrowly defined by his learning what college work required and his performing at that level. Honoring that relationship while also being a research-practitioner did not complicate the support I was

providing him academically. One of my objectives was relational from the outset of this study, to learn from and with my research participant who is enrolled in developmental courses. My objective as a teacher is to build trust in a collaborative environment of sharing and navigating relationships that allow for risk-taking in the form of asking questions, offering our stories and ideas in writing and in our voices, as well as reading aloud. I do not see my role as research-practitioner working with Greg as inconsistent with this classroom teacher orientation.

None of this means I haven't misrepresented him and his experience. I could have done some splicing of sentences and/or juxtaposed images behind his words. A common understanding of such practices would be taking expressions out of context so they mean something the author did not intend. This can, of course, be unintentional or an overt manipulation. I have raised questions concerning the validity of Greg's representations but have in fact attempted to answer those questions with the argument of his internal authenticity. Equally, in the describing the project here I am also creating a research text that is part a retelling, a story, and perhaps my own voice will be measured for its authenticity and may the time I spend on it be understood as a "deep and extended" experience as was Greg's attention to his experience. Similarly, I suggest that this writing itself is a piece of the retold story, *Crossroads Community College: Flying Solo*. In a sense, I am also authoring the video itself in the sense that I have shaped (largely by editing), pieced together and layered what was in its many parts disjointed. Hence, a metaphor for the research text that is useful here is similar to the Haw & Hadfield (2011) producer of a song who puts together many instruments—images, text, sound, and silence--with a voice of many ranges into a whole. Metaphor is a useful tool for narrative inquirers (Chan et al., 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in helping explore narrative form and convey meaning. This retelling, broadly speaking, is like many narrative inquiry



research texts a grand contraption “built on multiple, fluid foundations and formed into ambiguous shapes that may ring more, or less, crisp and clear as one thing from one vantage point and another from another vantage point” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 154).

My role in the authoring this contraption as a story is what I liken most closely to a puzzle maker. From a larger picture I’ve been shown by Greg as I have been situated with and alongside, gathered together the field texts and viewed in separate parts and inventoried, is an image from my vantage point. This image is a whole whose parts uniquely shaped by my mind and my soul and my hands is offered as a story puzzle which an audience must now assemble. In so doing, the assembly, while watching and may I suggest reflecting, yields a complex three-dimensional story mural of many themes for the taking and the using, depending on the audience’s vantage point. Due to the way the pieces of the story mural are framed in this video, watching is not watching a television program but an invitation to live inside the story and alongside Greg in a three-dimensional space, seeing a person not as a static figure but as a temporal being—in time’s current and moving himself or becoming—at once in a unique context and also a larger one in which we are all participants. In this watching that is a form of creative interaction is the opportunity for attending to deeper insights into the explorations of a community college student’s experience. As narrative inquirers are called, the audience is implicated in the story as a research text

to not only understand the current contexts and constraints in lived experiences but also rethink the contexts and constraints and think of new ways to be in relationship in their own experiences related to the phenomenon of the inquiry. It is in interpretation of experience where story resides and the potential for telling, retelling, and reliving emerge (Pinnegar & Hamilton in Chan et al., 2012, p. 3).

To double-up on metaphors, to travel and piece together this story mural, it is important to flesh out what has been considered narrative thinking. To do this is to establish the tools to explore this story, because researchers' response to inquiry of the phenomenon "is not always analysis but often turns to story instead" (Pinnegar & Hamilton in Chan et al., 2012, p. 2). Navigating the storied landscape of *Crossroads Community College: Flying Solo* calls to the foreground this thinking which Dewey (2005) inspired in his work on experience and later was mined by narrative inquirers. This is a three-dimensional framework of temporality, personal and social, and space useful to introduce the story and direct its audience to a narrative way of thinking that represents the wholeness of the life of the participant. This is to experience an experience as a narrative inquirer looking in each direction and asking questions that look in these directions and allowing a representation of a person not "taken apart by analytic categories," but as a person who is full of richness and complexity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To absorb this thinking of researching and looking at narrating, threads can be pulled from the picture to build this story that is continuing to be lived. These threads I have briefly explained below and provide some further thoughts of them in relation to *Crossroads* in order to assist in gaining entry into and thinking about themes. After the discussion of the ways of thinking, an excerpt of one interview used in the video will be shared and briefly examined as a puzzle piece in this story mural that is, literally speaking now, a documentary. A transcript and video link will also be shared then of my only video –journal to share what the researcher's voice in this narrative inquiry in the same format as the research participant's.

### **Personal and Social**

This dimension directs us inward and outward, inward "toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" and outward "toward the existential

conditions” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Greg’s outward perceptions are influenced by his history, his present, and his social space. In this sense, they are complex and often negative. His memories of school influence his present and gain emotional power in the places that he shows us, for example, as he reflects outside of a former elementary school he attended. At the same time, perceptions of others in his current school seem to echo the future that was forecast for him as an elementary student. Greg talks about this internal struggle as he cautiously expresses excitement about his accomplishments in college. As well as the reflections Greg provides about perceptions, this story brings in new pieces of action. Greg videotapes himself annotating his text for his English class. This is the image of a college student doing college work. He discusses the process as he works the process. At other times, he discusses better using resources for math, like his teacher and a tutor. That does not happen. The outward sense of himself as a college student reaches a threshold toward the end of this documentary film and the data collection process of the study, exacerbated by perceptions of his ability in math class and his inward and perhaps adopted/accepted negative perceptions he has assumed from his past. A brief shift occurs near the end, perhaps a replacing of some of the outward perceptions that he begins to articulate, and is a space of discernment where he makes choices about whether to adopt these new ideas about how others see himself in the present and his potentialities. In this new perception about himself, Greg outwardly imagines a new view and perhaps a clearer or possible future.

### **Temporality**

Awareness of time is an influence in the story as it points us “to temporality — past, present, and future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). History of experience in classrooms, that of his family, and the career dream he has for himself and so tightly holds are powerful in Greg’s story.

As mentioned, he reflects on his early education, particularly changing schools, being labeled as special ed, and the future painted for him. What Greg chooses to address from his past and when he does make those choices may be in part related to the prompts I've asked him to address. Other influences may be the place he finds himself and/or where his mind wanders during reflection. There are motifs in the story, re-occurring topics and issues that rear up, and sometimes Greg views them differently. I choose to see this as a fluidity that is important to the story: It does not present a perfect picture and what researcher and audience, like Greg himself, must do is work in the complexity of all three of these ways of thinking narratively. At one point Greg says he has always had the support of his family, but other times we hear him talk about being homeless, having abandonment issues, and also flying solo. The video used to make this story is long enough to provide multiple revisits of similar questions, allowing for the meaning to grow complicated as what was thought to be familiar puzzle pieces take new shape over the course of five months. His own interpretations of his past, perhaps his comfort level with thinking and talking about the past in the face of a present rife with complications, and the assessing of his future, are a remarkable challenge for Greg. The past, the present, and the future become intensely connected and influential and alive in this story. Greg is constantly trying to position himself in such a way that a future will involve his dream, or a Plan B, or the Back-Up Plan, before a plan of someone like a friend's or a legal system's overcomes him. In the end, who will care? Thinking temporally of Greg's story presents windows into the stretch of his life from its beginnings as he shows us pictures of himself as a baby in his front yard with his mother. A trajectory of a human life unfolding in this story becomes weighty as time itself becomes a character that is pressing its heel down on Greg.

## Space

Parts of this story mural involve and have special importance connected to space. An attending to “the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” is called for (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). With the participation of the research subject documenting some of these spaces a teacher-researcher would never see and may never hear about, the boundaries of this inquiry landscape grow more vivid and therefore influential in the retelling, *Crossroads Community College: Flying Solo*.

These are places where Greg tells parts of his story:

- My cubicle
- A table in the corner of the college library
- The living room of his mother’s apartment
- The apartment complex’s basement laundry room
- A picnic table in a public park
- Streets throughout his childhood neighborhood
- In front of his childhood home
- Greg’s car
- Outside public elementary school
- Outside a middle school
- Two college classrooms
- A friend’s living room (not included in CCC video)
- His kitchen table

Other places discussed or mentioned by Greg in field texts:

- East Stadium at the University of Nebraska
- Antelope Valley Parkway
- Penitentiary
- Burger King
- A demolition site (for a job) outside of the city
- Court hearing room

Many of these places in the story may seem to rest in Greg's life story and be considered or thought of as something akin to history, but in this study each is operating in relationship with the social/personal and temporal dimensions of the retelling. How this works has been discussed. For example, Greg's inward perceptions of himself as a student are influenced by some of the events that occurred in his previously-attended schools: some of them follow him like shadows. The memories work themselves onto his expressions as his forehead tightens, eyebrows tense, and his eyes narrow while his voice, cracking, takes a tone of defiance along with pain. The pain and shame is still with him, just as the pride referring to past construction jobs he worked on seem to fill his voice with self-respect. His confidence in himself as one with competence reverberates in his being.

In the landscapes through which Greg drives, sleeps, studies, and lives during the course of this study, one feature of this landscape central to his life, not just as a student, is the availability or unavailability of material and social resources: Transportation, a place to live, computer access, peers he can study with, college debt, a job, legal fees. When Greg rolls up his sleeve to show the dark scars he has from routinely selling his blood, he says his address is rock bottom. Greg is desperate to get on his own feet, desperate not to get buried in debt, and at times

desperate to run far away. The spaces where Greg narrates his story are often referenced in terms of their material support. Or, he makes a statement or inference about how he feels about them or how they make him feel, how they support or hinder movements through time on several different landscapes.

The subject of material resources features prominently on the landscape of *Crossroads* and holds tension for Greg from having his car break down, to facing ethical questions about his own behavior to make money, and many others. This is an unbalanced relationship, one that often asks more than one can or is willing to give. As one enters the retelling of Greg's story in *Crossroads*, observing where these relationships support or give Greg something that sustains him and those that take or ask more of him are important in understanding Greg and his decisions.

This discussion about the three-dimensional landscape of narrative inquiry and how I suggest it can be useful as a metaphor for understanding a re-telling is meant to open one to the richness of the story as a whole without narrowing the view on one theme. Greg is building a story that he's trying to live by in all of its past/present, inward/outward, and place dimensions. As the narrative inquirer, each piece is intimately textured in experiences, expressions that are embodied and relational, which is to say most simply they are shared as the result of a relationship that required two people to meet and talk and listen over the course of six months.

## Chapter 6

### Implications & Considerations: Decentering Within and Beyond A Story

I met Greg ten months ago and have sustained a dialogue with him more than any other student since I began teaching at my community college. The question I had since I began teaching was to understand the students who find themselves here, in my developmental education reading and writing classes: How do my students experience the world outside school? and How do I see myself in her story? As the work took shape, this study with and about one student was not meant to answer my question. It was meant to engage more deeply in the question and be open to new ways of knowing and being with my students. What became and is becoming is what I imagined it could be, a study that speaks to what story I want to make as an educator and what developmental education is and perhaps has always been, a struggle, a crossroads where people try “to become somebody,” as my research-participant Greg states directly, but is fraught with challenges that I should know and feel, not from articles, books, or statistical reports. Known in ways that “we”, broadly speaking to include stakeholders in our higher education system, really have not. Those who affect policy should know these stories because changes on the political horizon will impact the paths students can or cannot take in post-secondary education.

In one sense, this study was very modest: one teacher, one student. Now talk. A feature of the experience could be described as a long in-depth interview with Greg. I continually sought to know him from as many directions as I could and in as many ways he



was willing to share in different places and times, always the past and the present and future contexts moving, rubbing against one another, always influencing Greg's story and the role I might play.

Up to this point in my ten-year career as a college teacher, my relationship with students could be characterized as aerodynamically professional, completely framed around syllabus outcomes: friendly, flexible, open to change, playful, and still demanding. I knew what I wanted students to be able to do literacy-wise. Ten weeks are packed with activities that focused on our outcomes: sentence to paragraph to essay work. To do this, I know that the practice together has to be supported with examples and frequent feedback as well as socially-oriented activities. None of this work, I found, meant that I learn more about who my students are beyond where they measure up in the assessments. Of course, I learn from what they share in class about their lives and what they write about. I observe them, look to interpret non-verbal language, what they say, and what they write in course evaluations. But the pace of our work together, the limited time of each class meeting, and the 10-week quarter system make opportunities to experience and understand students' lives difficult. In this context, "aerodynamically professional" comes to mean a "no-stick" surface. While I develop my own curriculum tools and continue to tweak them, design new writing assignments, incorporate new technology tools, what I learn about why students withdraw, drop out, disappear, and fail seems just as vague and amorphous as ever. When I examine student success, those who succeed seem a lot like me at their ages. The more middle class, white, high school graduates with parents with some college background the more successful these students are in my classroom. This is unacceptable and suggests a blindness that needs to be explored.

A study of classroom practice certainly was and still is a good option. I have read about a teacher who was not aware that she was washing her hands every time she touched a student who was unlike herself in the same ways I mentioned. I observe myself, particularly have taken note of which students I maintain eye contact with and notice I speak more to those who I feel are receptive to my teaching. I am a good teacher who can teach poorly to some students. Video-recording myself in class, writing reflections about interactions in class and my feelings toward students, and interviewing students about their experiences would likely reveal behaviors that I could change or improve. I could apply findings from the work of behavioral psychologists who analyze social-perspective-taking strategies to measure gestures, eye contact, and tone to improve these and other modalities of communication. This strikes me as valuable but also as a bit superficial and temporary. What really makes teachers change or adults more broadly speaking? And is it really possible knowing that change in adults is rare (Pajares, 1992)? And does stating that one wants change necessarily mean one will actually accept, embrace, and hold to a change, especially one that holds to the promise of improving the understanding and practice of working with others?

Before I began this study, I planned to learn more about who people are in the developmental classroom. I believed that by practicing a methodology that approached the work as relational, hermeneutically-influenced narrative inquiry that a strong relationship would evolve. What did happen is that I care a lot about Greg. As I listened to him talk, sat with him during his assignments, corresponded on email and text-messaging, and then

retold his story in *Crossroads*, the story in its telling and retelling takes a shape inside of my own story. This story, sustained in conversation over many months, is kept as what I will consider to be a “touchstone text”, returned to, ready to use. I am sure there is a lot I do not know about Greg, but the irony is that I came to learn about myself in this process of listening to the perspective of another and seeing myself reflected therein. The idea that to explore a relationship on the border of school, indeed outside of the classroom, stretching into the past and the present, internal ideas and outside perceptions, as a way to be a better teacher, a more human human can seem removed to what it means to be a teacher. It is a bigger picture, actions and events that may resemble what Freire discussed with Horton in *We Make the Road by Walking* (1990) when he discusses what it means to reread the world, “confirming some already known knowledge and knowing something different . . . [a] going beyond” (Horton, p. 86) to where change is possible.

The idea of change is an obstinate one at an individual level. It’s also difficult on a much grander scale when one considers the achievement gap, those yearly K-12 student test scores that often delineate gains in learning among groups and does not disappear when students come to college. As the number of students who pursue a higher education increases in pursuit of a national goal of being first in the world in graduation, community colleges are expected to shoulder much of the challenge, according to *Bridging the Higher Education Divide* (2013), a report that is sounding an alarm about the racial and economic stratification of students in higher education. The report claims a demographic divide of

students in two-year versus four-year schools is increasing, a divide that often mirrors the achievement gap.

### **The Power of the Educational Deficit & Blame Games**

Ladson-Billings (2006) has offered a view of education as a deficit, rather than a gap, that has essentially been culturally sanctioned through systems of justice, economics, and education over the course of this country's history, a complementary movement that has privileged opportunity and success for some and constrained it for others. Through such a deficit, she argues that taking corrective action in any one or all areas of society is enormously challenging and would take years. No simple solution, no law, no new educational approach can somehow solve the compounding nature of any one-year gap in learning measured in test scores. Teachers play a role in this system. From Hull (1991) to Higbee (2005), a historical blame game in K-16 levels has been noted, placing deficit notions upon students' flawed characters, biological developments, and cultural differences and communication styles. Well-trained teachers are not immune, as "resistance is often inchoate just as oppression is not deliberately intended" (Erickson, 1987, p. 352). Classroom discourse analysis can illuminate subtle shifts in a teacher's holding to a student's lack of exposure with a task and then slide into blaming a student's cognitive ability. Such a shift turns a difference into deficit and speaks to "the lasting power of deficit notions in our society" and can subvert "forward-looking notions about language and cognition" (Hull, 1991, p. 313).

[Hegemonic practices] permeate and frame the school experience of students who are members of stigmatized social groups. These practices are enacted by particular

social actors. . . . routinely in concert with the cultural assumptions and interests of the dominant group, existing power relationships can be maintained, as it were, by an invisible hand (Erickson, 1987, p. 352).

This “invisible hand” can be associated closely with the “bundled arrangements that pre-determine sayings, doings and relatings” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p. 268). From the perspective of the learner, these influences can be seen as “learning architectures” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and from the teacher’s as “practice architecture” that are

always-already pre-structured, shaping what people think and say, what they do, and how they relate to one another. In this sense, the settings, as sites for practice, are collectively ‘designed’ through traditions and expectations, in ways that shape how people will act when they enter and engage in practice. (Kemmis and Smith, 2008, p. 269)

While this architecture influences events, relationships, and results in the classroom, as noted by aforementioned scholars, the tradition is shaped by the broader context of time and place. Therefore, it is useful to look, as *Crossroads Community College: Flying Solo* reveals, “into the local community and the broader social order . . . to identify the roots of educational failure or success, trust or mistrust, assent or dissent” (Erickson, 1987, p. 345).

This heeds Higbee’s (2005) call for more qualitative research on community college student experience that teachers themselves should be participating in and learning from. This need for participating in the experience of students is Shaughnessy’s (1977) widely recognized “sounding the depths”, where a teacher-researcher opens to the difficulties and incipient excellence of a student (p. 239). Condon (2012) clarifies:

We need to learn to read, to engage with one another's stories, not as voyeurs but as players, in a dramatic sense, within them, and as actors who may be changed not only by the telling of our own stories, but also by the practices of listening, attending, acknowledging, and honoring the stories of our students . . . (p. 32).

In this way, a practice Condon (2012) refers to as "leaning in", I suggest a kind of engagement with the life of students is an inquiry that has the capacity to improve relations between teachers and students and help sustain both in a hermeneutic sense of opening the self up for further experience. This is not the work that leads to transcendent stories Condon (2012) warns about, those stories that provide a false sense of rising above but entering into the fray. Such study depends on the teacher researcher and participants building or at least claiming agency through their voices and a trust between them that has the potential to rearrange the "architecture of a classroom," or at least make it more visible.

### **Touchstone Texts in the Making**

Neilsen (1998) discusses literacy in a way that explains how adolescents and adults develop critical awareness and agency in one's own life and how texts become real and incorporated into lived experience or inserted into their social world. In her analysis the potential for stories takes an indelible shape in the lives of those who witness, share, and take up their re-telling. Those texts that become real enter the social space and factor into an on-going dialogue. As Neilsen observed, her son's and his friend's on-going dialogue about one of their favorite movies, she saw these young people repeat lines and re-hash moments of the story's plot in various contexts of their lives. They continued to relive and retell the story, thinking of it in different ways. Neilsen describes this experience as a

“touchstone text” in such a way that I see the story not as a past experience but as one that grows in its usefulness, is ever-present, its images and events, ready to be called into play, changing but never forgotten.

For myself, I expect this text-in-the making to become real enough that the story Greg tells and that I retell becomes a touchstone text that will shape and influence my seeing and engaging of the “other” in and beyond the classroom and even have the potential to become a “touchstone text” for others who “read” the text might also be engaged to listen deeply, engage in meaning-making with it, and re-tell it. To further explain this idea, I see this as an evolution of He and Phillion’s (2004) idea of literary imagination via printed text. This is text in the making.

Phillion and He (2004) introduce narrative imagination as a mode of inquiry to building empathy and understanding in teachers for students with whom they share little in the way of experience in the world. This is a commonly accepted purpose, generally speaking, of literature. Close at hand to literary imagination, narrative inquiry involves researchers selecting narratives of their own or from other stakeholders and these stories take many shapes: personal narratives, autobiographies and biographies, life histories, and oral histories, to name a few. This educational research “is one way of investigating theoretical and practical problems and illuminating human actions through the study of subjectivity, experience, and culture” (Schaafasma & Vinz, 2011, p. 29-30).

Texts of all kinds then can be used to build understandings. The hermeneutic experience that underpins narrative inquiry (Kinsella, 2006) provides inroads into a method in the making that holds rich possibilities for those who collaborate on such

research, in my case, teacher and the student him- or herself. This method in the making concerns itself with questions of what enables understanding beyond the will of the individual or a particular method while acknowledging human creativity (Smits, 1997) and the role of language and “active engagement in the construction of narratives” (Smits, 1997, p. 19).

To understand literary imagination as acquiring awareness by way of walking in another’s shoes and entering the world of the other, one becomes “an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotion and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have” (Naussbaum, 1997, pp. 10-11) as well as enabling one to “cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called ‘other’ over the years” (Green, 1995, p. 3). This clearly correlates to the aim of qualitative research to reveal and achieve greater understandings.

To help explain this entering into literary imagination, which I claim is at the center of making a touchstone text, Connell’s (2008) exploration of Rosenblatt’s reader-response theory is important. Here the experience of reading a text can be thought of as co-creating a new story with a research collaborator and its possible meanings in and around and through narrative inquiry. Rosenblatt’s ideas, which lean on Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy, involve a generative and transactional experience that can occur “during the interplay between particular signs and a particular reader at a particular time and place” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. xxxiii). This is the temporal context of narrative inquiry that shapes transactions by unique pasts, the shared present, and future potentialities. Rosenblatt emphasizes this deeply human transaction as certainly not objective nor does it resemble



an economic exchange involving currency and, hence, a banking process of transferring information of which both modern and past educational practices have been accused, as well as modernist research. Rather, what I consider a narrative-building experience, reading “highlights an active, reciprocal relation between reader[s or researchers] and text that brings together a complex mix of personal, textual, and contextual elements as the initial phase in a process of meaning making” (Connell, 2008, p. 104). Connell clarifies this as a personal connection wherein readers engage in critical social processes of examining interests and meanings with other readers, and some elements of the personal aesthetic experience are brought into a realm of shared meanings. This is therefore a reader-plus-text perspective that recognizes

the organic relation between reader and text in a meaning-making process that considers continuity and social contexts is crucial to the transactional perspective. These fundamental connections to Dewey’s notion of the transactional nature of experience are important to understanding the evolving balance between reader and text in Rosenblatt’s theory (Connell, 2008, p. 106).

This balance, Connell holds, is found in a process of experimentation and inquiry that provided Rosenblatt with an epistemological foundation from Dewey: “what has been completely divided in philosophical discourse into man and world, inner and outer, self and not-self, subject and object, are in actuality parties in life-transactions” (Dewey and Bentley, 1940, p. 104) that are processed through readers, and in my endeavor,

researcher's personal, social, linguistic, and cultural history to create educational experience. This has the potential to go beyond literary imagination to one of relationship and empathy in "an ongoing continuum" of purposes for meaning-making among its participants. This ongoing continuum is the life of a touch-stone text.

This discussion of using theories of reading to expand understanding of touchstone texts connects to a discussion of experience and hermeneutics, especially as explained as "the art of understanding" such that it is a practice related to discourse and understanding, or *verstehen* (Gallagher, 1992, p. 3). Whereas hermeneutics has used text as the paradigm, the emphasis here is the interpretation and the broadening of focus to nontextual phenomena. Philosophers reconfigured hermeneutics as existential and phenomenological understanding, and Gadamer (1979) claimed that hermeneutics allows "what seems to be far and alienated . . . by the character of being distantiated by cultural or historical distances speak again" (p. 83). This expansion of the concept of hermeneutics makes the world a text calling for interpretation and the same kind of processes of textual interpretation and engagement apply to understanding the world.

Doing the work of hermeneutics, however, can make one vulnerable to his or her subjective-relativist references and images of self. The experience makes visible, if not fractures, a pre-conception of self and world. Mayo (2004) contends that "a suspicion that one does not know as much as one thinks one knows allows one to remain more open to the possibility of difficult relations. Further, a suspicion about one's ignorance can be a motivation to form relations that keep one grappling with one's understanding of the world" (125-6). The transactional experience of reading and now interpreting involves

grappling or wrestling with the meaning in an on-going continuum.

### **Entering the Story, Finding Roles**

There is conflict or challenge taking place in the making of a touch-stone text. One is not on the sidelines caught up in the drama of the story, but a character in a real sense during the conduct of a narrative inquiry study. In the video-journal labeled “L. Phip’s Reflection 2.18” (appendix), I put myself on camera to do what Greg, my research participant, had been doing and would be doing for several months. The 16:06 video, viewable here: <https://vimeo.com/73703494> [password: college], shows me grappling, or even groping for understanding, after Greg had called to let me know he would not be able to come to school because his mom had the car. In the video I review our conversation on our way to school and also the conference we had after his class. I struggle to position myself as a teacher and what role I have to play in supporting Greg. As an intensive advisor, I have to help my advisee build a connection to the college, navigate its bureaucracy and resources, and assist him with his developmental reading and writing coursework. Up to the point of making this video-journal, I had been meeting Greg once a week for a month for approximately three hours of face-to-face advising and Greg himself had logged 12 video-journals. My role in this study and in the advisor relationship had become fairly consistent at this point: I listened to him describe his work, I asked questions, and I monitored his place in class and directed his efforts. It was basically a support role. In this reflection I found myself confronting the boundaries of what my job was and assumptions I held about Greg. Here is an excerpt:

We talked about politics a little bit. I have the radio on and I was a little surprised by

his . . . I got to learn something out, I don't know if I was surprised ... I think I might've been. He says he gets his information from a couple sources I've never heard of, Russian TV, [and] sounded like a radio host out of Texas and have some criticisms of the current president of his politics and maneuverings so that kind of surprised me that a person who's Black and young who is suspicious of a black president, the first black president this country, not what I would hope but not necessarily something I would necessarily not suspect.

I probably have made assumptions and not thought about them though. I did offer and asked him if he had lunch and he said not really but he would be fine so I did not push that point. What else ... I did share some of my views not really specific I didn't say I would favor the president on most issues as opposed to ... against those who would oppose him.

I am in favor of Obama but not without criticism also. And he expressed a conspiracy theory. He believes that in 2016 the United States is going down, going down and by 2016 he said it might be gone. That was a surprise and the move to take guns from people is connected to China and that they will end up coming here and we won't have guns to defend ourselves. That's how I understood it anyway.

“Surprises” are where new perceptions confront assumptions about Greg and are clear here and continue to emerge over six months and can be isolated into themes:

- Greg is alone in school
- Greg is fiercely independent
- Greg's views lean on conservative ideology
- Greg's perspective of his earlier schooling history is unclear but obviously full of conflict
- Facing math is not only cognitive but seems psychological
- Financial issues frequently enter into and strain his position in college
- Sudden and regular shifts in economic, legal and social areas of his life send tremors into his educational experience

Such perceptions named *themes* are readings of pieces of his story he's experiencing with me, as he sits across a table, in the doorway of my cubicle, in the passenger seat of my car. He shares in the transaction of his own story, and I myself over weeks and months of our meetings, make meaning as we both grapple with understanding the past and the present and what roles we play in this story. In an April 2 video-journal, Greg comments: "I be looking around and I be wondering. Everybody wanted him to be president so they could keep getting their welfare checks, their foodstamps. . . . We don't need government. . . He wanted all of us Americans on foodstamps, be more dependent on government. Control over us." And on April 11, in an interview, I raise a question about the nature of our relationship, specifically asking about trust. Greg veers into a broader discussion of people, particularly in school and math class in particular. "People are just so distant," he says, and a few sentences later he comments: "First appearance people want to judge. Walk in the room people want to perceive me as a bad guy, like a gang banger. But in reality I'm not that person. The only way they have to try to get to know me. . ." (April 11 interview). He

continues:

When I look at our culture, we have a trust issue. The way they perceive us automatically. When people get out here, smile in your face, pump you up, get you all comfortable, and then doing the complete opposite. Being in class and you're the only black person, even though it's not obvious, almost like a tension vibe. A secret level, somewhat of a little bit of race. Other races are usually against us, we kind of have this crazy messed up attitude, kind of rejecting that same thing and it shouldn't be like that. But trust is something you have to slowly build because a lot of people be like that fake stuff, they falsify and it's a hard thing to separate and grasp. . . It's all about the thinking in the mindset. It has to start from that and build from that. (April 11 interview)

Kerdeman (2003) recalls Gaddamer's concept of *being pulled up short*, which is relevant to this experience that increasingly grows in its complexity and its conflicts--emotional, social, legal, and academic. This involves "events we neither want nor foresee and to which we may believe we are immune interrupt our lives and challenge our self-understanding in ways we cannot imagine in advance of living through them" (p. 208). This idea of pulling up short also speaks to Mayo's (2004) idea that education is not to become home, in the sense of making it a comfortable, accepting environment where conflict does not live. "The experience ought not to send them into a comfortable exchange of stories, but should push them into a painful, critical reexamination of their active ignorance about difference" (p. 127).

## **When a Story Becomes Real: Facing the Self in the Other**

Difference in this experience with Greg may largely be due to my assumptions of Greg that I brought into our relationship, assumptions influenced by stereotype or the architectures I have inherited from society. Palmer (1998) claims that teachers and students “are constantly engaged in a seamless exchange between whatever is ‘out there’ and whatever is ‘in here’, co-creating reality, for better or for worse” (p. 47). Over regular conversations and communications, the “out there” becomes “in here” in ways I had not experienced before in conversation with other students and in their writing. I cannot read or watch Greg’s video without questioning whether the years of hushed comments from colleagues who suspect some students in developmental classes are enrolled because of the “free” money they might get through federal financial assistance—had I allowed such negative views and others more subtle but no less detrimental in their power to limit our relationship to take up space in my lens of viewing students I work with? Greg seems to be speaking directly to me as potentially one of those “people be like that fake stuff” (April 11 interview) and who judges others. I was completely unprepared to listen closely and act and therefore came to see my own finitude, or lack of ability to control the world, as he shared his. Such an acknowledgement, Gadamer (1981) claims, is an understanding that entails a loss or exposed weakness in myself. Kerdman (2003) helps explain:

While accepting this paradox is hard, doing so can free us from the despair that denying it arouses. In this way, being pulled up short can liberate us to become more fully human and 'present' in the world. . . . While this experience is painful, living through it can awaken us to choices we could not otherwise imagine (p. 289).

Working with students in developmental classes should offer routine opportunities to be “pulled up short”, an awakening in each present that lends itself to a feeling of loss and awareness of notions of deficit fed by grand narratives that have shaped identities of largely a white, middle-class teacher population. Pervasive, shared assumptions about ability and remediation that can influence teacher-student relations and assessment of a student is difficult to demonstrate (Hull, 1991), but in the course of this study which has taken the shape of a story, the transactions characterized by grappling and being pulled up short are on-going.

I am suggesting a different narrative can be shaped with practitioner-researcher and student-participant research that is supported by sustained dialogue, which does not guarantee anything but a decentering. Condon (2012) insists that she question the sense of self as alone and not responsible for her subjectivities. To make learning possible, she inquires into the “depth and degree of my connectedness to those social and historical forces” that she enacts in her experience (p. 62). What can be experienced is the self as a stranger, or

... the miniature version of the self that can be seen by leaning in to see one’s own reflection in the eye of an Other. Decentering is like this. I try to shift the focus of the aperture of my mind’s eye, to open it wider, to let in more light. I need to see, to know differently. I try to move myself so that what I can see of the world changes. I need to see, to know the world differently. (p. 62)

Decentering, as being pulled up short, is epistemological and rhetorical practice, “a way of re-searching, and thus of producing new knowledge about the self-in-the world” (Condon,



2012, p. 63). This is the “leaning in”, which also leads to an unhinging from reasonability, that self one knows and is comfortable with, in order to “change the conditions of possibility for being differently and resistingly in that world” (p. 62). Along with my own decentering, I can hear evidence of not just confronting some of my assumptions but of my role as a teacher. I was in the role of “intensive advisor” but still saw myself as a teacher questioning what I have previously referred to as “no-stick” pedagogy and practice despite what I may have thought about my classes being based on social interactions and learning about one another. I also carry with me the title of developmental instructor that is often associated with the phrase “hand-holding”, a disparaging expression for what we are sometimes asked or offered to do for students. In the same video-journal, I talk about the decision to offer and follow through with picking Greg up for school. I imagine what being in the world differently might look and feel like. A clear sense of risk comes to the surface as I examine what I consider reasonableness and unreasonableness:

Listening to the radio on the way back from lunch, after dropping Greg off, I was listening to Harry Belafonte give a speech, an acceptance speech, for an award he just accepted and he had talked about radical voice, the need for a radical voice and I'm thinking about my move, which was to go, my offer to go get Greg, may be considered radical and it's such an obvious thing that anybody would do for a friend, obviously a family member, but a professional a professional teacher to go get a student and bring them to school is breaking clearly a written or unwritten rule. It may be written someplace I don't know but at least it's . . . you are crossing a personal, uh, outside of school, space where people feel vulnerable in the established relationship of what, how we treat each other is confused and so that is

a dangerous, if you want to consider it radical, if I'm trying to elevate my behavior to what Harry Belafonte might be suggesting about needing to talk the voice and I am thinking as a thought that, yes, that is a radical action. Could it be care if I want it to be or as an example, right, of my wanting to get to, talk about it on camera, even though I will claim I am not, would be doing this if I was not doing the research would I do that. I would think about it, I don't know if I would've acted on it. Who's to say, but the point here is, I think, the thought of do we need to question what it is to the relationship of teacher to student. Is it time to consider the broader context beyond the classroom walls as space where a teacher can, uh, be a human being with, toward, alongside, students in . . . a way that may or may not have been considered in a discussion of research. I'm not saying teachers haven't done this and do it, they're just not typically tasked with it and it's a scary thing. (2.18)

It's an acute example of being pulled up short, as I watch myself squirm and essentially say that being a teacher does not allow one to behave as a human being sometimes: The role of teacher has a professional ethos that can essentially constrain a human response, such as leaving to give a student a ride. In this moment I cross physically onto the path of the experience I am researching. It's a moment where I suggest that I enter the story as a clear actor and the consequences of this role may affect my relationship with Greg and perhaps my school. I question the motives behind my behavior, calling out the possibility of wanting to perform a transcendent act, a heroic role. I dismiss this as "ridiculous." I also raise the question of my own maturity, testing the experience to see if it holds up against a past experience. I wander eventually into this notion of teacher behavior that can be "radical" and whether the time is right to ignore what I believed were safe roles. This story now had

me inside of it and it was messy and unclear. Greg was also experiencing his own challenges in his experience as a college student as he stared down his past and complicated his present place as a student.

### **The Past as a Character in the Present Story**

Since I began teaching college developmental education classes, I have wanted to understand prior experiences of students' educational backgrounds. The last page of the syllabus can be torn off and turned in. It asks students to respond briefly to biographical questions, one of which asks them to write a past school experience. I anticipated students' childhoods, broadly speaking, and specifically school, were not always easy for students in my classes. References to troubled pasts have not been uncommon, but the stories I thought would help me see what they bring with them were few and with little detail, and what I heard or read have not stuck with me, inform my understanding. In my study with Greg, he not only talks about his prior schooling, but he physically revisits the front doors of some of his prior schools, turns on the camera and talks. In interviews, he also draws on these experiences. The main impression he leaves from his reflections are not positive. On February 6, parked in front of an elementary school, Greg's face grows dark with a scowl as he revisits this time:

This school I had a lot of bad memories for my school career. This is the back end of Clinton. Things just wasn't as chopped up to be. It's just one of the bad experiences I had. That's prob one of the reasons I have a difficult time in school now. Kind of why I don't branch out, be asking for help and things like that. Like going to that school over there, I just felt like I was always, uh, rejected. You know what I'm saying, I

asked for help, I could never get it. Teachers used to put their hands on me. Like I go report things. It was just a whole mess. I don't know. Once I got to different schools I guess it was a little different. Not too much. They still had it planned out and plotted like you know what I'm saying, like what I was going to become. You know. I guess it was just one of those things, right? (February 6, Driving)

One week later, sitting at a picnic table, Greg again returns to the topic of his educational experiences through his high school education. He summarizes: "K through 12 was a very bad experience. I was kind of abused when I went through elementary school. In middle school I started to rebel. In high school, they didn't take the time to show me anything. Already had me labeled as some type of thug or in prison before I was 25" (February 15, Picnic Table). At times like these, Greg sounds victimized, then he will claim a role in what was happening, saying he was by no means an easy student to be around. He clarifies that he had attention deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and problems controlling his anger. "I had abandonment issues growing up. So I guess that played a role. Some people don't know how to handle something like that when it's standing right in front of them. Yeah, so those were some rough years" (Driving, February 6). More than two months after beginning the study, Greg, in a March 13 interview behind shelves in the college library, recalled being a "hostile student" who would "blow a gasget and like I would try to clear out the whole library, I was just that type of person." As he continued he took a more reflective turn, one using what sounds like a tone and distance of someone who has gained wisdom:

But now growing up, looking back, seeing all my mistakes and things like that, seeing how far I've come, it just . . . I'm hungry for that change and I know I have

changed a lot over the years since high school, but there's always room for more change. And coming here it just fills me up more. I don't know, I guess that's kinda why I figure I'm going to register for another class or something . . . I just feel like I need to make a correction from the bad experiences I did have in school . . . I just want to be able to turn all that around. School is a good thing. It's not all chopped up and critical like everyone says. I just want to have something good to talk about. Like, I don't know. Just . . . I just want to show a big positive throughout this whole experience. That anybody can do it. (3/13 interview)

As I revisit the shared experience of sitting with Greg when he says this and the video-journals at the picnic table and outside of one of his elementary schools, I get the sense that he is "confirming some already known knowledge and knowing something different . . . [a] going *beyond*" (Horton, p. 86) to where change is possible for him. At the same time, I get to participate in some of the conversation where this is taking place, and in so doing, the complexity of the past and the clarity of the present helps me see the difficulty of expressing just a story of your past school experience, especially to a stranger who is also connected to a school. Many threads of story that Greg visits share this complexity. One way to see them is that Greg is victim of a story, a narrative of school abusing him, planning his future. Another view is that Greg begins writing his own story, claiming his role in his past and authoring his own story of his future, as he himself returns to several times when he considers taking on the "myth of school," whether it really does matter, that a person isn't anything without an education. But he knows this is no easy *happily ever after* story. School, he has found, is a place where he can find some success; it's also a place that's "tough and it's really intimidating" and the demeaning sense of stereotyping is debilitating

(May 8, Math interview). At the same time, he expresses fear that outside of class he is “about to get railroaded” in court and lose his license, claiming responsibility for some of his traffic citations but is being treated unfairly at the same time.

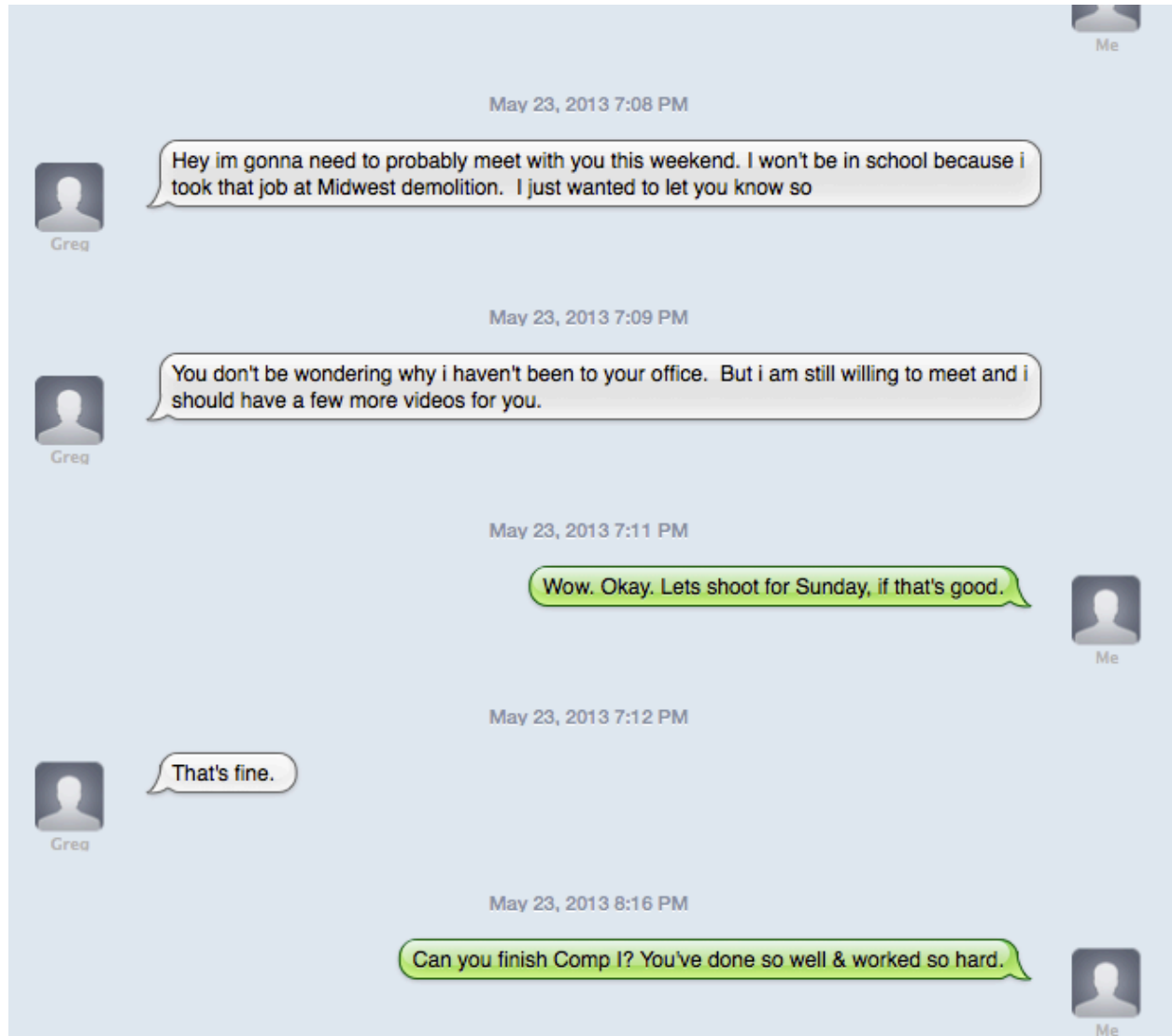
### **Responding in a New Story**

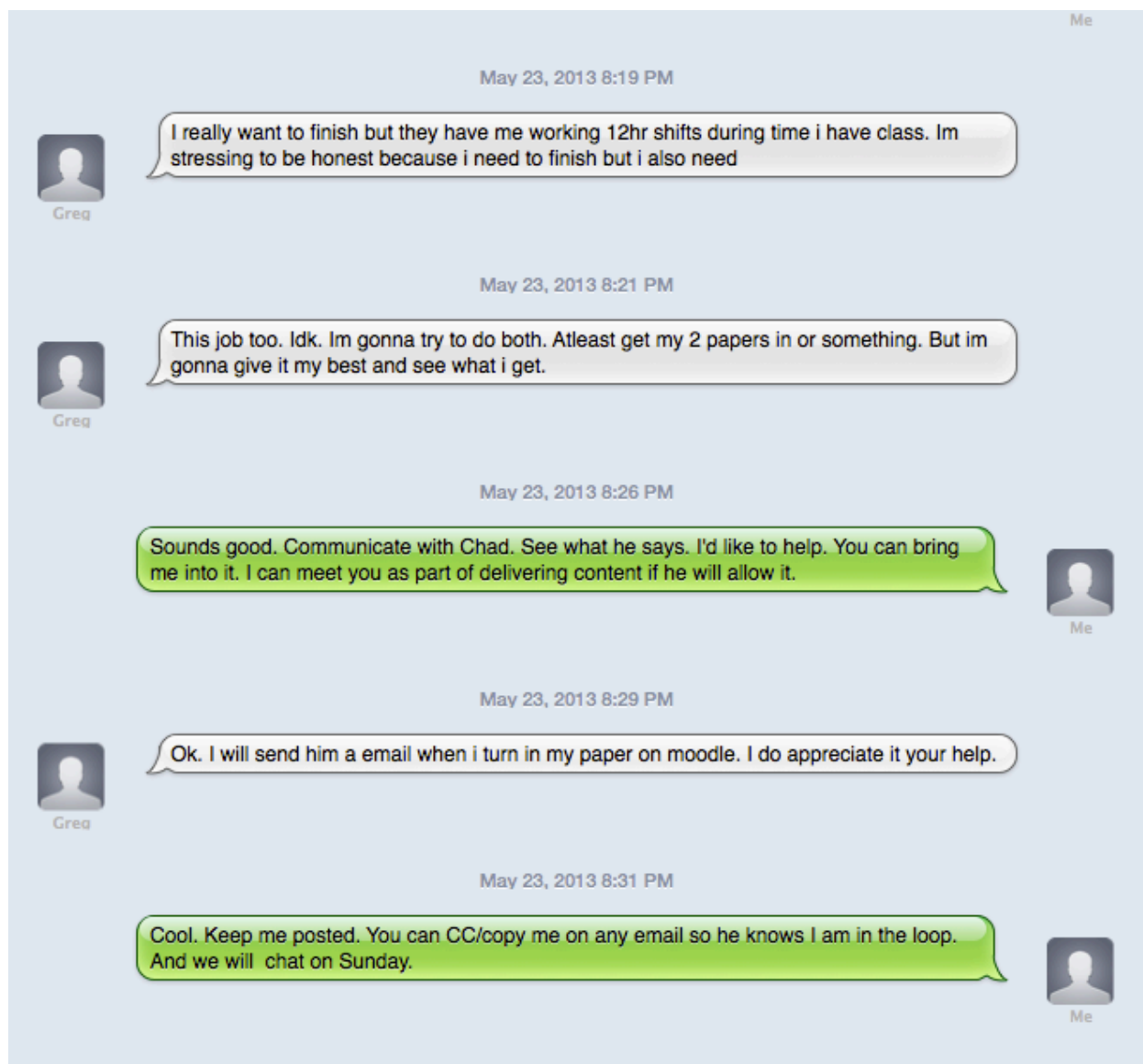
The reality of what is fair for some and unfair for others is a challenge to society and teachers in particular. Can school be a myth for some and a reality for others, as Greg says, speaking generally and at once aiming it at his own situation. This prompts me to look broadly at our shared landscape and ask myself, at the immediate point of contact, within the conversation, am I holding up my end of the bargain as someone who is expected to help improve the situation. With Greg, I scribbled down a math plan for him: where to go (Multi-Academic Center), when, and how often. We set short-term goals for using resources he will not follow. I am mostly mute when he hits what I consider a bottoming out point and says, “What a helluva life. Lincoln’s sucking me dry. One way or another. It’s rough. It’s rough. You can tell me if I sound crazy” and shakes his head. I stumble. I grope for words. I hesitate and stammer, “I don’t. . . . You have a lot on your plate, that’s for sure. . . I know one thing, that school should be a bright place . . .”

“I love coming to school,” he jumps in. “Every day, even though I don’t go to math class. I like the environment. . . . And when you do something good and get recognized for it it makes you feel good. Like an addiction” (May 8, Math interview).

Yes, bright spots. But difficulties, to say the least. In the May 18 interview, Greg contemplates running from his problems. “It ain’t all new to me. It just gets old after a while. You just get drained,” he says. Without notice to me, Greg, failing math but passing

his English 1010/Composition I class, takes a job that takes him out of town and stops coming to class. Then, he texts me and this exchange occurs:





I do not fully understand Greg's financial situation. I have never been in his situation before. I email his English teacher and let him know I am working with Greg and explain the situation. Other than that, Greg drops in and shows me two of his compositions that I give him a few pointers on. Before the end of the term, Greg quits the job and attends the last few class sessions and manages a passing grade. I recall a part of a February 20 blog from the previous developmental English class: "There is always room to grow and learn new things or brush up on new things. I just have to slow down and take the time to



understand how and what I need to do in order to understand these things that im writing.” His awareness of his learning processes struck me. The manner in which he presented events in his final Composition I essay “The Waitress Has Gone Mad” indicated that he was taking his time, going slow in his descriptions of an unpleasant breakfast experience at the Village Inn near my house. When the waitress, the source of behavior I can hardly imagine, handed Greg and his two friends their checks, she asked about her tip, and the young men indicated that the service had been unreasonably poor. “She responded with ‘No Tip then No Grip’ and snatched the piece of toast out of my mouth. I couldn’t help but choke and give her this crazy look with a smirk on my face in disbelief. My friends started to laugh as she slammed dishes into the bucket and pushed the cart away.” Greg’s tone in the essay was not one of hurt or humiliation or bitterness, emotions I imagine I would feel. He had crafted a story of an event that he and his friends now recall, Greg concludes, with laughter.

Greg seems to accept certain conditions in the landscape of his life, many of them, as he would say, are “hectic” and “ferocious.” He just rolls with many of them. When I connected him with a friend who offered free legal service, Greg shrugged it off. I wanted to fight the citations that put his dream of becoming a heavy equipment operator in jeopardy. The legal system can be flexible for some people, I know, just as I believe educators can be flexible with students in unique circumstances. When Greg text-messaged to ask to meet, I was relieved that he was reaching out. It felt right assisting in the communication with his instructor and meeting on that Sunday at my house to go over his assignments. The story of a touchstone text in the making connected to other conceptions of curriculum and learning.

### **Running the Course: Currere and Bildung**

Pinar (2011) explains the conception of curriculum as a verb (*currere*) -- a lived experience, a running of the course “wherein the curriculum is experienced, enacted, and reconstructed. . . . through conversation, not only classroom discourse” but among students and teachers and within oneself (p. 2). Equally important is the educational concept of *Bildung*, the cultivation of the “inner life,” such as the soul, the mind, the person and his or her humanity (Biesta 2003). These concepts emphasize curriculum as experience and privileges the individual through “constant self-education” in “an open-ended process without set goals, except for each individual striving to perfect himself” (Mosse, 2000, 184). *Bildung* suggests an ideal and *currere* helps direct the process through academic and non-academic subjects with conversation with others who are different, and therefore complicated, and reflection. “The fact that conversation is, then, complicated is not only a pedagogical problem but also an educational opportunity to understand difference within resemblance, and not only across our species but also within life on earth, as well as within our own individuality, as subjectivity itself is an ongoing conversation,” Pinar (2011, p. 6) explains.

These actions encompassed by ideas of *Bildung* and *currere* rebuff a rote learning concept of education and the codified nature of conversation that often characterizes discourse within the school and without. Actions also could be constrained within what Lave and Wenger (1991) call “learning architectures” and later what Kemmis and Smith (2008) call “practice architectures” where within particular settings there are bundled arrangements that pre-determine sayings, doings and relating.

These architectures connect to what Doll calls the “ghost” in school curriculum as “control,” (in Pinar, 2011, p. x) which of course is more than a phantom; control has a role in these traditions that, while it can be defended, can constrain the individual. I directly raised the question of control to an elementary principal and friend: In what situation can you ignore or break a school rule for an individual? This question defies an easy answer without context. I believe teachers and administrators can and should be ready to break a rule, change a lesson’s direction, and ask and respond to unpredictable questions based on the broader idea of enacted and embodied curriculum referred to previously.

To break with a rule, a plan, a behavior, or a belief requires the ability to act educationally, foregrounding the individual, not the system or some other guideline. Kemmis and Smith (2008) call for a praxis stance that supports the idea of *currenre* and *Bildung*. That is, a praxis stance drives to build a practitioner’s capacity to act in the interests of each student, society, and communities that allows for prudent decisions in the “heat of the moment” as action is unfolding in order to serve the individual and the development of society and the community. “Enabling praxis, then, requires developing an enduring commitment to acting in ways that avoid doing harm, and that avoid injustice” (Kemmis and Smith, p. 265) to the individual and “requires a commitment to one’s own self-development, and one’s development in connection with others” (p. 271). Kemmis and Smith (2008) recall Hoyle’s (1974) “extended professional” who is given not just the technical skills and content to do their work, but “also the professional autonomy and responsibility to act in the interests of students, their communities and their societies” (p. 275).

Some can say this sounds pretty good for *a developmental education teacher*, as someone who might've said at one time, "Pretty good, for a girl." Scholarship that involves extended study of a student's experience will perhaps benefit the teacher-researcher more than the researcher. It is a commitment to one's own self-development, and one's development in connection with others in pursuit of the good of all humankind (Kemmis & Smith, 2008). I contend this scholarship can and should contribute to larger policy issues, especially for and by developmental educator-researchers whose discipline faces a growing scrutiny by state and national interests. This scholarship should address academic and non-academic support questions in one's own institution and the larger special interest policy initiatives that are currently shaping a national agenda for developmental education reform (Lu, 2013; Managan, 2012, 2013). Much of this agenda is predicated on a false interpretation of data regarding the influence of developmental education (Goudas & Boylan, 2012). Bahr (2011) bemoans the small fraction of total research on community college students and how little qualitative research exists to inform the much larger body of quantitative study.

In the absence of such qualitative work, quantitative researchers are left to speculate about the reasons and causes of observed associations, and this speculation carries over into proposed interventions—to the detriment of the success of those interventions.

(p. 7)

Bahr (2011) argues for a shift in research that has been traditionally tied to simple analyses of pre- or early-college student characteristics and credential completion or drop-out outcomes. Pathways students select while in college and relationships between

decisions and student outcomes as well as why they make these decisions will provide “insight into students’ understanding of key decision points and the meanings that they attribute to their choices” (Bahr, 2011, p. 2). Research with students, such as mine with Greg, provide insight into these decisions, some of which can be supported by the school, such as advising, tutoring, and navigating the college; others may not, such as legal and financial, and can inform different kinds of studies, perhaps larger qualitative ones. But I would be anxious to see a study with more individuals be as illuminating and create a stronger argument than Greg’s voice over six months. One viewer of *Crossroads Community College: Flying Solo* asked, now that Greg helped me with this research, what am I going to do for him and others. I agreed, but also turned the question inside out and asked myself, “What am I *not* willing to do for him?” This is not rhetorical. I shared earlier my reflection after picking Greg up for school and thought about a radical voice and a radical practice that moved into an enabling of praxis. But like this study, which looked beyond just the school, the teacher-researcher has to move beyond the school and advocate for the life of that story, which can expand understandings of enacting curriculum and the broader landscape of our educational system. The touch-stone text calls to be used particularly in how it resists reduction. I draw on it now, spoken to me in the midst of experience I shared:

Those are just the opportunities I’m try to steer away from because there are too many statistics out here people going to the pen, going to prison for things, dieing out here, doing stupid things. There’s too much of that going on out here. Just putting people as statistics in the books. I don’t want to be a statistic. If there really ain’t nothing out here to really be successful at other than working at Burger King or something else. So I need to find something that’s outside of what’s deterring me

from all that. (Greg, interview, March 13)

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## Appendices

### Video Notes

WINTER13.0999.VIDEOGRAPHY				
	Name	Date Modified	Size	Kind
FAVORITES	0.TIMELINE.5.13.docx	May 6, 2013 8:06 AM	20 KB	Micro...ument
	Dissertation notes.docx	Jun 19, 2013 4:00 PM	19 KB	Micro...ument
Dropbox	Greg	Jun 27, 2013 7:58 PM	--	Folder
	0.Video Notes.docx	Jun 25, 2013 10:22 AM	54 KB	Micro...ument
All My Files	1.28.13.home.driving	Jun 27, 2013 7:55 PM	--	Folder
	A.atHome.1.28.GREG.AVI	Jun 24, 2013 10:08 AM	775.4 MB	AVI movie
AirDrop	B.drive.1.15.GREG.AVI	Jun 24, 2013 10:09 AM	80 MB	AVI movie
	C.DRIVE2.1.28.GREG.AVI	Jun 24, 2013 10:09 AM	356 MB	AVI movie
Applications	1.31.driving	Jun 27, 2013 7:57 PM	--	Folder
	D.driving1.GREG.1.31.AVI	Jan 31, 2013 4:24 PM	38.6 MB	AVI movie
Desktop	E.driving2.GREG.1.31.AVI	Jan 31, 2013 4:30 PM	478.2 MB	AVI movie
	F.driving3.GREG.1.31.AVI	Jan 31, 2013 4:43 PM	684.5 MB	AVI movie
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Downloads	I.driving4.GREG.2.6.AVI	Feb 6, 2013 8:34 AM	216 MB	AVI movie
	2.15.13.park.homey	Jun 27, 2013 7:58 PM	--	Folder
Movies	A.adjust.camera.GREG.2.15.AVI	Feb 15, 2013 10:35 AM	23.1 MB	AVI movie
	J.homey.GREG.2.11.AVI	Feb 11, 2013 8:08 PM	57 MB	AVI movie
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Pictures	L.phip.reflection.2.18.AVI	Feb 18, 2013 2:35 PM	1.45 GB	AVI movie
	2.20.13.conference	Jun 27, 2013 7:59 PM	--	Folder
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	N.interview01.greg.2.20.AVI	Feb 20, 2013 11:42 AM	2.15 GB	AVI movie
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KodakEPC31...	P.laundry.room.3.4.GREG.AVI	Mar 4, 2013 7:48 AM	1.57 GB	AVI movie
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Phillip Ross'...	Q.interview2.1.GREG.3.13.AVI	Mar 13, 2013 10:32 AM	485.7 MB	AVI movie
	R.interview2.2.GREG.3.13.AVI	Mar 13, 2013 10:56 AM	2.15 GB	AVI movie
SDOXFED012...	S.interview2.3.GREG.3.13.AVI	Mar 13, 2013 11:10 AM	882.9 MB	AVI movie
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DEVICES Remote Disc Microsoft...	▼ 5.8.interv.Xroads.math	Jun 27, 2013 8:01 PM	--	Folder
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	▼ 6.7.13	Jun 27, 2013 8:01 PM	--	Folder
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	📺 Z.4.Office.6.10.AVI	Jun 10, 2013 9:33 AM	304.4 MB	AVI movie
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	📺 Z.5.Greg.6.18.13.copy.MOV	Jun 18, 2013 4:17 PM	907.7 MB	Quick...movie
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	📄 I used my study ti...est that i could.docx	Jan 22, 2013 2:14 PM	13 KB	Micro...ument
	▶ Greg.MOVIE.6.24.13	Jun 27, 2013 12:01 PM	--	Folder
	📄 Pain inside rap.lnk	Apr 6, 2013 2:22 PM	982 bytes	Unix E...le File
	▶ Spring.12.research.SCC	Jun 27, 2013 12:01 PM	--	Folder

**From:** Philip M Ross  
**Sent:** Monday, January 28, 2013 1:34 PM  
**To:** Greg McGhee (gregmcghee32@yahoo.com)  
**Subject:** videography topics 1/28

Hey Greg,  
 That's great presentation on the first three video entries! You've talked about difficulties with computer access—have you thought about public libraries? Downtown at Gere Library they have computers you could work on, especially on the weekends (Sat & Sun). Just a thought.

I wonder about your mentioning of "quotas", something about "they've got to fulfill their quotas." Can you talk about that more specifically?

Ideas for the week: TOPIC: HISTORY

- You call your neighborhood "T Town." Go in depth on your experience and connection/disconnection to this place? Your history here, if you will.
- Describe your education before coming to SCC. Where, What it was like, tell a success or difficult story of school.
- Describe your family and how they've shaped you?

Hope you're having a good class right now. Let me know if you get this email okay and if you have any questions, would ya?

Talk to you soon.  
 Phip

**From:** Phip Ross [PRoss@southeast.edu]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 01, 2013 1:26 PM  
**To:** Gregory Lamar McGhee  
**Subject:** hello

Hey Greg,  
 How's it going? Just got back from San Francisco early this morning, so I'm dragging today. Hope you're doing okay! I'm around the rest of the week and hope to catch up with you. Maybe Friday? Or sooner if I can help with anything.

If you'll let me set you up with a math tutor, just let me know what time? I'll have Kris meet you in the LRC. Let me know, I say again.

Take care,  
 Phip

From: Gregory Lamar McGhee [gm392444@live.southeast.edu]  
 To: [Phip Ross](#)

Monday, May 06, 2013 11:22 AM

You replied on 5/6/2013 11:26 AM.

This is my plan for math class. I plan to spend twice a week working on my math in the tutoring center to get ready to take the tests, so that i can test out soon. I plan to spend atleast 1 hour working on it and between assignments in class. I plan to hopefully be able to take a few of the tests a few weeks.. I am emailing you this because i do have to leave early for a court hearing. We can discuss this plan when i come on wednesday. Ill talk to you soon.

Greg McGhee.

*Phip Ross*  
*Sent Items*

Monday, May 06, 2013 11:26 AM

Sounds great, Greg. Thanks for sending/sharing with me. I'll see you Wednesday after Math (1:30). ACTIVATE the plan before we meet. Let me know if this does not work as a time.

Consider doing a video reflection outside after your hearing: what happened & how does this affect you, your goals?

See you Wednesday. Hope things go well.

Phip

## Authorization/Permission for Music

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://www.mobygratis.com/user/34381/requests>. The page is titled "mobygratis" and has the tagline "music for independent film makers". The navigation bar includes links for Home, Catalog, Videos, Blog, Support, My Requests, My Account, and Logout. The "My Requests" tab is active, displaying a table of music requests.

Track	Status	Requested	Approved	Expires	Last Download	Download Count	
Aerial	Approved	07/08/2013	07/09/2013	10/07/2013	07/09/2013	1	Download
Homeward Angel (Long)	Approved	07/08/2013	07/09/2013	10/07/2013--		0	Download
Homeward Angel (Long)	Approved	07/08/2013	07/09/2013	10/07/2013	07/09/2013	1	Download
Shot In The Back Of The Head (Ambient)	Approved	07/08/2013	07/09/2013	10/07/2013	07/09/2013	1	Download
Isolate	Expired	05/20/2011	--	--	--	0	

Below the table, there is a "Welcome" message and a list of recent requests.

Video Transcripts: Greg Video Journals and Interviews with Phip

atHome.1.28.GREG

08:36

My crib, my pad, stay here with my family, with my mother. My study space, anything I can do without a computer. I don't have no computer, no laptop, no touchpad, no hightech. We're not hightech around here. We're pretty basic. No cable . . . describe my study space. When I describe my study space, this is not a picture of me. . . something to be kind of creative, have a little imagination. A little laugh. Everything else . . . the chair I sittin ain't got no cushion, no wheels, no type of luxury. Bascially I have that hard mind labor. Like reading in class. My mind does not depend on technologies like everyone else. Maybe my cell phone. It's pretty much all I got.

The book we're reading is called The Shallows by James Carr .. talking about intellectual technologies, how the mind develops and dependent on technologies, like GPS, the clock, . . . had to rely on sun dials, shadow movement. Talking about language, different languages, Asian alphabet is more simple than English, only language in world where language is different than it sounds. When it comes like to technologies ... people don't want to read no more. Rather have the internet, scan, than read a full paragraph. Whole bunch of things. Kind of complicated. Don't understand scientific thought.

I do most of my book work here. Do most of my work at Southeast. ... Hoping this video does pretty good for you Mr. Ross. Hoping my ...

2009 professional truck driving, 8 -18 speed trucks, almost 60 feet. Good experience best ever encountered in my life esp since how I came up in my life. ... Go back to my basics before I get to Omaha and become a heavy machine operator. . . I'd like to own an excavation business one day. ... level out dirt . . . I did do a little bit of work on new arena, 19<sup>th</sup> street corridor, antelope valley roadway. I had a hand in that. When I started it was Antelope valley. By Bob D. Center. . . . a pretty good experience. East stadium. Tight squeeze getting truck through there.

But Now I'm back at soutuheast trying to get this heavy machine license such as rollers, compactors, excavators, bull dozers, that's where the money's at. But yeah . . . still single. No girlfriend. No kids, thank god. I sleep over there. About as good as it gets around here. Kinda wonder where this video

drive.1.15.GREG

00:56

I just got through doing some studying. Taking a little break. She had to take here little kid to the hospital. I guess this is how I spend the break. It's Friday night. I guess there'll be no action, partying for me tonight. How it goes. I will probably go get something to eat.

DRIVE2.1.28.GREG

04:01

-man, been away from the camera for a while. It's been one helluva weekend. Trying to study. Barely got anystudying done. Been up all night. Been to the hospital and all that. It's just been ferocious. Trying to get this video done but it seems like I'm having a heckuva time doing that

because I've always got to do for family and di for everybody else. And then I've got to turn around and trying to rush and get my homework done at the last min, and lib and compu lab ain't open on Sundays and I ain't got no computers and ah, it's just been hecktic. Yeah, I'm on my way to school. I ate something in the morning and try to get some homework done and see how it goes. So I don't get behind. Right now I'm out in t town. Show you a little clip of that. Off of 33<sup>rd</sup> and R street. Yeah, so. This is the neck of the woods that I be in. . . . Oh, forgot my flash drive. I have to go back to the house. I forgot my flash drive so I can get my report done and things. Yeah. So this is over off of 33<sup>rd</sup> and vind. The school. There go the police. I guess it's the county sheriff. You know what I'm saying. Like He always lookin, always be trying to sop people and get that quota. And things. You know that goes. Yeah. I never went to school there. I did a little work for them when I worked for B excavating. I don't work for them no more. I'm inbetween jobs right now. Another thing. I lost my job this weekend due to school. But .. It's alright, you know.. cuz I needed to do something. I needed to do, try to get off to school and try to get this machine license. And they just weren't accepting. They really wasn't willing, you know what I'm saying, to train me on none of the equipment so I had to do what was best. I can't go around and possibly show off some of the little projects I was doing with them. I can't show what I be doing because I ended up getting laid off or let go due to me having to go to school. They wanted me full time but I ended up having to go part time. Um. It wasn't too much, a few hours, and that's all I needed and they just weren't understanding with that. So, yeah. Go on with the school thing. That's what I'm trying to do. Oh, ... hold the camera up. Don't want the police stopping me.

**Driving1.greg.1.31**

00:26

Hey, what's up. Getting ready to head over to Ttown. A lot of traffic. I'm not even tripping about it.

**Driving2.greg.1.31**

05:21

Alright this is T town. Right off of 28<sup>th</sup> and T street. T town is part of north lincoln. Stretches from 27<sup>th</sup> st to about the west side of wyuka cemetary to vince street to about O street. Yeah, so this is the neighborhood. Neighborhood had a reputation when I first moved here. Kind of ruthless and high crime. But it kind of mellowed out over the years. As everythign went down, moved to the south side of town. Everthing the south side gets used to go on over here. This is T street, the only part of lincoln that has a distinctive look, pretty much its own character. I never really found a neighborhood ehre in Lincoln that's like this. It has some narrow streets around here. This is the private school over here. Over here in T town. But yeah. This side of town, I can't remember the original name of the neighborhood but yeah we always called it t town. But my connection to t town is I grew up around here . Just right around 28<sup>th</sup> street and I also lived over there in Howell leigh neighborhood. I spent most of my childhood years over there. And I just come over here to see what's going on and see if I can find some fo the narrow streets over here in case you've never been over here on this side of town. Like I said the

streets are pretty narrow around here. Like I said, you'd never find . . . here is one of the narrow streets right here. So narrow you park on one side another car can't get through.

When I was a child, we came over here to ride bikes, play hot wheels, little slumber parties. Block parties. Over here. Most of my time was spent over there in Holly neighborhood. Just on the other side of 27<sup>th</sup> streets. 2:46

I tell you about my neighborhood.

Yeah these streets are really narrow. The crime really aint as bad over here like it used to be. A lot of people say that they kinda feared being over here but I think it's much safer over here than it is over on the south side. But there's a lot of good people over here in the summertime. The kinds be playing and thing like that. But go ahead and head over here to the holly neigh. And show you. I want to get another last, T town. Old houses. Looks kinda urban over here. It stretches from 27<sup>th</sup> on to east side, and stretches to Wyuka Cemtery from O street to Vine street.

This is about 28<sup>th</sup> and R. This is the area that I used to kick it in play. This house on the corner was the house I always played at as a child. It's kinda of distinctive. Got this little church over here. . . .

### **Driving3.greg.1.31**

07:40

This is the howell-lee neighborhood I was talking about. This n and right along with T town used to be the black community back in the 60s and early 70s. From the research I have looked off into they wanted to radical road improvement. Where they wanted to build a roadway somewhere similar to the antelope vally roadway they just built a few years ago. But from what I had read up, that agenda had failed through the city council, like 6-1, and got overturned. There wasn't enough voter signatures so it ended up getting shot down.

This little area of town used to be quite the hot spot. There goes that Whitter Jr high school before the university had bought it. It sat abandoned. I been in tehre a few times bef the u had bought it. It's actually a pretty nice school. I kinda wish LPS hadn't had kep that and turned it off into the original middle school that it used to be.

But this is the neighborhood. Used to be a decapitated neigh. .. 2:10.

This is the old cushman plant. Right around here there used to be like a skywalk but the u took that down. This used to be quite active. Being a kid I used to come over here and play. Me and my cousins a couple of friends we was quite curious. Um. Everything, we used to go play around the cement yards. But this whole area is quite different. Quite changed up. Ever since they built that police station over on 27<sup>th</sup> street the whole area has kind of improved. But. Yeah. A little shop district.

We're coming up on Dudley street right now. That's one of the streets I used to hang. Over here by the lumber company. We're driving by the house I spent a lot of years in. Right around here in the neighborhood. Used to be really bad in the winter time. Just like 21<sup>st</sup> street. This is the street, man, I grew up on. Later years, my elementary school, going off into middle school. It was quite interesting when LPS actually had busses. But this is the house, the yellow one, it's quite changed a lot. They inclosed the porch and it looks kinda ugly but it's cool. This is the area. It's 23<sup>rd</sup>. This area pretty much resembles all the rest of them around here. This little building right here used to be like the corner store. I used to go in there and buy all types of little candy and things. This blue house my uncle used to own that house. I remember when he first bought it first time I first operated some machinery. Um. It was actually quite interesting. To run a bobcat for the first time. Haul brick when we re-did the basement. Ever since then I had kind of a little fetish running heavy machines, like. After that, like, that's just what I wanted to do. I ran my first bobcat slash skid loader probably around the age 8 years old.

This neighborhood has kind of changed a lot. Has turned into a quiet neigh. Houses abandoned. Used to be a slum town. Full of rot. It actually kind of fixed up a little. I'm glad to see that. Actually fixed it up.

Take a stroll by the police station. You would never recognize it. Salvation Army. Penzer park. Kinda got the police behind me. ... Old furniture store before turned it into a childcare center. ... Changed a lot with all the cops. We'll see.

Video tape. Some people don't like that. This is my neighborhood. A little piece of history. Maybe we can find something else.

#### **Driving4.greg.2.6**

02:25

Alright this is the school I went to, Clinton School, since around 93 since I moved here. I started going to school, thinking first grade. This school was rough, kind of a bad experience. Around the fourth-fifth grade reading a second grade level. I had problems and ended up switching schools and went to Huntington. It really wasn't the greatest. . . .

This school I had a lot of bad memories for my school career. This is the back end of clinton. Things just wasn't as chopped up to be. It's just one of the bad experiences I That's prob one of the reasons I have a difficult time in school now. Kind of why I don't branch out, be asking for help and things like that. Like going to that school over there, I just felt like I was always, uh, rejected. You know what I'm saying, I asked for help, I could never get it. Teachers used to put their hands on me. Like I go report things. It was just a whole mess. I dono't know. Once I got to different schools I guess it was a little different. Not too much. They still had it planned out and plotted like you know what I'm saying, like what I was going to become. You know. I gues it was just one of those things, right? Let's go ahead and shoot on to the next school.



**Driving5.greg.2.6**

02:06

Driving6.greg.2.6

21:13 [interview]

Culler Middle School. Rough start from previous history. Progressed through the years.

Q: progression?

A big majority: pretty rough. Started to smooth out before I graduated. ... Teachers had a prediction about how I was going to turn out. By 25 incarcerated. . . . Certain teachers would call my house . . . I had ADHD, and anger issues. I had abandonment issues growing up. So I guess that played a role. Some people don't know how to handle something like that when it's standing right in front of them. Yeah, so those were some rough years. . . I pretty much have overcome that. For the first time, I've never had that. This is a whole new experience. I honestly don't know how to really take it. It's something I've never had. No one's ever taken the time to sit down and teach me things. . . . (Ms. Gall & you).

The decision to come back to school was rough. LPS did not really teach me anything. . . I was quite nervous. I was coming to school not too confident. It was a real struggle to get through that class (truck driving). I pretty much got more comfortable with it. . . I pretty much decided to come back to school the second time more positive.

I barely get any support from family. I'm pretty much on my own.

Role models: . . . Not really. The only role model: Shadow Starr. . . . friends turn their backs on you, turn on you. Ever since then kind of like one of my idols. Give me a different picture of how I see the world.

10:00 missed/failing a few on Exercise Central, so stopped.

A whole lot of messed up stuff. Pretty much all stripped away. One cop. One ticket. . . . Because I got a negligent driving. Said I was trying to run. Stays on my record for 55 years. So that knocks me out of that career for life. . . . 10:30.

I copped that back in July. Said why are you trying to run? Turn in my license now. Filing a lawsuit to get their money. Suit No. 2. DOT they're strictly by the book. Fines.

"If you could make one thing go away . . . like the negligent driving . ." Took my CDL. No insurance co. will pick you up.

15:00 Selling my blood every week. I'm truly living rock bottom.

I pretty much have to chop it up and move it forward. Recreate and replant my future. Go back to the drawing board. One ticket and a couple charges on top of it.

- Seatbelt \* No plates \* No operator's license (DOT for failure to switch addresses) \* Negligent driving

But I come here to school, relieve some of this focus.

-

Adjust.camera.greg.2.15 00:15

Homey.greg.2.11 00:38

**Picnic.table.greg.2.15 19:23**

- Book I really can't get acquainted with. Kind of hard to understand it. Stressful. 's what you have to do if you want to succeed. Trying to focus. Trying to do this work when you don't comprehend it. When you've got everything else going on in your life. Trying to work. Trying to study. Family time. The whole time I was trying to type my paper I was losing out on sleep. It was nerve wracking. I've mentioned being homeless a few times. I chose this park bec when I was homeless this was the type of parks I used to . . . I used to stay at whenever the police couldn't find me. You know after hours you weren't supposed to be. Really briefly about my homeless experience. It was hard. It was difficult. It was cold.
- Pretty much the only artifact that I got . . . [looking through camera pics] I will just have to show you . . . When you don't have anybody, during my little adventure as I like to call it, I only had maybe my moma, my "cousin", maybe my grandmother. . . . I lost everything during the time I was homeless. I had it in storage. People who come along and want to buy it, they really don't care about what the other person is losing and don't want to put off . They don't want to be in someone else's shoes and think about it . . . Brought up the point about how I graduated high school. Should've been a second year senior. Miraculously I ended up with (enough credits).
- K-12 was a very bad experience. Kind of abused when I went through elementary school. Middle school started to rebel. High school didn't take the time to show me anything. Already had me labeled as some type of thug or in prison before I was 25.  
[6:00]
- In reality, he was doing half of my assignments. He told me, yeah you will be graduating with your class in 2006 but should've graduated in 2007.

- At home, I was always encouraged to go to school, to get my education, to become somebody. What you see out on the streets, always getting in trouble, got the police on them . . . The house I grew up in there was a strong push to be successful. . . . 2009. My family supported me through it. I almost dropped out but I made it through. It was only a 3 month course.
- Usually just me and my mom.
- 8:45 Kind of reached out to me, helped me out. I wasn't getting quite the hang of it. She said to holler, and I hollered at her. And she helped me out. Ms. Gall and Phip, they make me feel good as a student. They make me want to keep pushing. . . . I wanted to call it quits. And just turn it in. They reach out and actually make me feel like I am somebody. So it's a good experience. . . . Good class. Nice and good to get that one on one interaction. A lot of people in my situation who don't get . . .
- My pathway to college has always been rough. I didn't know if I really wanted to go back to college. Before I went back to SE I felt like what I had was good enough. I didn't want debt. Pell grants. Then you've got all that debt behind you. 11:30 Sometimes people can't even find jobs.
- Part of me believes it. And part of me doesn't. I'm kind of hung on that school of success. Part of me believe it, part of me doesn't. I guess I took that step if it's really true. To prove that myth even though I'm uneasy with it.
- I've got all the resources I need. Every time I walk through those doors at SE I feel like I'm a part of something. [12:30]

Gradaute about 2015, which would be nice . . . before Obama gets out of office . . . Yeah, martial law.

I think it's hard for AA to stick with school because of some of the things we face, some of the things are good, some of them are bad. Like a lot of AA don't stay in school is pretty much because of the street game. . . The activities out here. Like, some people can't go through school with their friends out here, they want you to get out here and get into illegal activities or just be out partying, chasing females. . . When you're friends constantly bug you about that, like I guess some people look at you like that, . . . 14:20

Part of my problem is doing for other people instead of myself. . . . takes away from my study time. . . A lot of people in the black community . . . I don't think they're really too confident for who they can be. It's like society sets a low standard for us. And I think the AAs, I think we take that to heart. Some people have family. I don't have family. . . It would be a lot easier for me than other people (I don't have family).

How the world projects us, how we look at the world. Like going to high school I never dropped out but I felt like I just didn't belong. The school set low standards for us. That's my opinion. It's just one of them factors. 16:00 . . Come from families who have money or the ones who have

basketball scholarships. It's like that debt, debt . . . I know I cringe. You just don't want to accumulate any more. Before I came back to school, I was \$10K in debt, by the time I finish it'll be another \$10K, especially when you've been sued a couple a times behind that. . . . More people should look at school and try to succeed and give it a shot. There's really nothing out here in this economy. . . . A lot of jobs look at it if you don't have the school, we don't look at you. I think that's a bad deal.

My experience at SE has been pretty good. Do my best. . . . I'm really going to try to engage. Be that quarterback and block out all the negative and focus on the positive.

**Phipreflection1.2.18** 16:05

As I watch this, I'm reminded of the 'big idea' of mine that teachers don't know squat whenever they enter a classroom. They're assumptions are all dangerous holes through which he/she can fall as he assesses students, the kind of people they are and the needs they have as learners and emotional, political beings. And, secondly, and relatedly, is how fluid identity is, how changing and moving it is and that to make an assumption and learn and correct it through experience must start over the next day and/or at least be open, expectant of that constant: change is always in the next meeting.

**Interview01.greg.2.20** 23:34

Camera: If I had my choice I would have the camera running 24/7.

What I like about writing, how my mind lays out, how my mind speaks. It's better to write on the computer than paper. Therefore can keep with the flow of my thoughts, compared with piece of paper, have to focus more, comes out slower.

READS SUMMARY ALOUD: ties pretty close to the essay I wrote because almost everything I wrote. Big reflection of overall of the book.

Hypertext vs. paper text conversation: clarification, definitions, differences/contrasts

"deep reading" basically silent reading, fit your experience with the book

MISSED COMPARING WRITING ON PAPER VS. COMPUTER: READING PAPER VS. COMPUTER/HYPertext

11:40 Feels like I'm reading from the book, other things distract me, surroundings, can't keep my attention.

Working memory: basically something going on in the present.

14:40 Didn't finish chapter. Unless it's the newspaper, read that all day long, front and back. Just depends on what I'm reading in order for me to actually connect with it.

My favorite part is the local section. I want to know what's going on. The records. The courts and all that. The blodder. (clarification)

16:50 Goal setting . . . if we could try setting some goals, if that works.

17:30 PART OF THE PROBLEM, SO MANY THINGS (MISSED WHAT HE WAS SAYING, NOT LISTENING: 'that's the problem, I don't know . . . I just have to figure out them goals, there's a lot of goals I still ain't figured out life goals.' SO MANY THINGS WE WANT TO DO.

ONE STRENGTH/ONE WEAKNESS:

- The writing doesn't seem like too much of a problem, unless it's the grammar. Describing in detail. I don't have a problem with that. (19:00) DEPTH OF IDEAS & EXPLAINING.
  - My writing will never come out sounding like an author. I write it in such a way that I'm talking right to you.
  - He asks "informal/formal" 20:20: casual
  - The writing I do is probably formal. I CLARIFY.
  - EXAMPLE OF WHAT MS. GALL SUGGESTS CHANGING?
  - Several periods for a break, some things like that, she pointed that out in 'I like your style' but you can't do that. If I really think about the grammar I don't have any problems, if I really try.
  - KEEP YOUR EYE OUT FOR SPECIFIC AREAS YOU CAN SET GOALS FOR YOURSELF. SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.
  - I'm always thinking about goals . . . My mind is a whole lot of talk,
  - Interested in movies, try to record. Anything I record I have to be careful, things people do, and my own safety, I have to be careful about what I record. Not around here.

**Interview1.2.greg.2.20**

06:00

- - OTHER FACES, SHOULD PROBABLY AVOID OTHER FACES.
- YOUR LIFE IN PROCESS, SOME OF YOUR PAST. I THINK OF YOUR HONEST, YOU'RE PRETTY COMFORTABLE WITH THE CAMERA, SO IT'S BEEN REALLY GOOD TO SEE AND HEAR WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY.
- 5:00 Basically the same way I write you want me to visualize with the camera too.
-

Annotating.2.22.greg

12:38

At home: What's up? Just working on this intellectual book, trying to do some of these annotations. Just got to get this stuff done for my reading class. But yeah, this is how we do. Color code . . . figure out all my little points. I think this is chapter 9, chapter 8. . . it's kinda hard to understand. I guess it's got to be done, so let's get it done. This is pretty much what I have to do, so let's get a shot at this. This is how I spend my study time, here at the house, peace and quiet. When I do get it anyways.

(highlighting: 2:40)

Let's go ahead and highlight my little points, so when I get ready to type my little paper, how I can find my points, my quotes, that kinda represents the whole book, the points of each chapter.

Sometimes it gets kinda hard to find your points when you're not quite understand the book. . . but we do our best.

This all my little underlined ones, like I showed you with the yellow highlighter, kinda switch up on my annotations a little bit. Shows book. Those are my points with the yellow highlighter. Switch colors to maybe get (5:15). . . Always try to do something new. Circle the words I don't know to put it in what the word means. That's kind of difficult too when you don't have internet. . . . Sometimes when you don't have internet access hard to look up on the thesaurus . . . but other than that . . . uh, yeah. (6:20)

7:30 talking: have to write the summary. . . end of the quarter, March 18, I know I have a lot of studying to do, and try to bring my grade up. I didn't do too well going to high school, but I know for this, I'm feeling pretty good about it. Pass with at least a C, C+, even better with a B or an A. Trying to shoot for a B. . . . Hopefully all this works out. I guess, depends on this class if I continue on this class. Justifies if I go back, provided I have to pay them some money if I fail this class, but that's not going to happen, that's not going to happen. (9:00)

Next essay, how technology is messing with me. About how I don't have phone service. Keep documentation on that.

Hope to get all this done so I can at least get some sleep this weekend.

11:25: only three of us showing up now, but that's cool though . . . more time to interact with the teacher. Get a little one on one. Ask questions and not be too rushed along, so that's pretty good.

We'll see what happens. Alright.

**Laundry.room.3.4.greg**

17:29

One of the strangest places . . . picked the laundry room. One of the only quietest places to focus on what I'm trying to concentrate on. . . . This book right here, The shallows by NC, talks about the intellectual technologies . . . how it controls our minds. . . Pretty much what you'd call a dry read.

Last week . . . had to write an essay on it, reflect on how it ties with us. . . . an experiment to .. WITH HIS LAPTOP ON THE DRYER. Laundry room for a reason. A bit of peace and quiet, what to focus on what I continue to talk about. [2:50]

[bars on the window; shows the monitor/his essay/reads aloud] to do a personal experiment on myself (memory on places) for 30' a day. Didn't get five days out of me. (got 3); how my mind will adapt to them (4:42) without using a GPS. With this experiment I expect basically any place that I go for the first time, directions, drive there, leave, not paying attention to how you got there, you magically just go back to that spot that you were originally there . . . original technologies to help us actually get around . . . our visual thoughts, everything we see, how we go off on that. I can pretty much pinpoint any place in Lincoln. You take the time, you pay attention, you can actually learn. You don't need technology.

This essay is like 6-7 pages. I'll read from the chapter NC was talking about.

7:00 Primary memory, short term, and working memory. .. to figure out all that information . . . to find out where we're going, using working memory. "LT memory . . ." To be honest I don't even know what that means. Biological processes are different, I guess. He says 'LT memory is consolidated . . .

9:30 One of those books you just go to class you just hate doing, just smash into desks. One of those books you just cringe. I guess my whole reflection before class (my car broke down, I've got to take the bus) . . . go to class beat down. Leave class frustrated. With this book, it's frustrating. (10:33) . . . I've got a lot that's going on next door. Wanted to tape at the house but it just wasn't up to par. Hard to stay focused. Trying to pull things off the top of my head. I really can't go some place cuz my car broke down.

Going to class feeling a little bit better, a little ahead of the game. I can kind of relax and move forward. But yeah, um, almost the end of the quarter, almost 2 weeks left (pacing) 12:00 Got to go find a job . . . if I do try to enroll in class this next quarter end up with a full class, survival is a big part of my decision for . . . if I'm going to take next semester's classes or not. Not having a job is kicking my behind a little bit for the situation I'm in. . . Yeah, um, I don't know, going to school, thought about being some type of writer, movies, making music videos, I started getting more comfortable with the camera. I know a lot of people don't like the camera so that kind of limits to me with what I can do . . . 13:15

Good thing we're pretty much done with this book. . . . Hah, thank God, know what I'm saying. This essay I read you a little bit, bits and pieces, like our little experiment what she wants.

Basicallyl, typed in, um, what it's about, how . . it reflects to the book, what I thinks going to happen, and then pretyt much back it all up with points from NC and scientists. I thought the last essay was bad ; this one's just as bad. Ms. Gall is cool but . . . killing everybody with this assignment. Just not a good ass to pass off on students . . . cuz everybody's struggling with it.

If I come back, I hope to come take another class with you . . . I guess this is one of the moments, I need to get a shot outside the school.

16:00 It's the end of the quarter, only 3 weeks left, started with a class of 6. Now down to 3. Feels almost like it's a competition or something. Like we all have to go for that prize. It's interesting I like all my classmates. SXs me and Ms. Gall go one on one. Walk away kinda stressed out.

With this little experience, influence me to come back to SCC try to finish some other things, maybe not this quarter, maybe the following quarter. And see what happens. We can go from there.

I've got a long bus ride to catch to try to get to school.

**Interview21.greg.3.13** 5:26

My experience in Dallas . . .

3' prez. Kinda stalled on that one, but she gave us . . . I still have some questions as I go along. (reflective paper/computer . . . )

**Interview2.2.greg.3.13** 23:50

6:27: reading growth

Used to skim through information, find little points, and run with it. She told me that I had to sit down and actually engage with the book. I guess that's where I started annotating. Putting notes on the side. Break down so I could understand it that much easier.

7:40 When you're writing some little summaries or reflection, so basically you have to twist it up . . . summarize so I could understand it . . . therefore put the letters so I could understand it in my own words. 8:20

10:30: conversation about ideas. (?)

I hope you have other examples of your writing.

Bits and pieces.



12:10 Academic skills resource: I'm supposed to add all that. Didn't have computer access, go to library for 60 minutes, limited, then after that completely shut down on you, lose your information. That's why I always spent all my time here. Either than or do no work at all but I figure I'm here for a reason.

13:00 Before class, I didn't even care about the spelling. I didn't care about anybody else about reading it. She . . . be on top of your spelling . . . I had to switch it up, with the correct spelling.

(that's one change for you, spelling, formatting, other thoughts on your changes as a writer?)

Just little basics, what I had to use, to grasp when it came to this class.

(seems like changes the kind of essays you wrote, doing college-level work, emerging there, look at the changes in that paper: spelling, MLA . . . bigger skill is the way that you are thinking on paper, developing ideas on paper, you have examples of that, the critical thinking . . . incorporating quotes in the text, applying to your own experience, do some talking about, and showing)

Therefore I need to find a piece of paper. Run-ons and compare that with my essays.

YEAH. NOT TRYING TO THROW A WRENCH.

19' gave G some ideas:

Plan for G coming to class on Monday, 8:30. G writing it down.

I guess the whole failing thing, if you fail you've got to pay them. So I decide to go down and holler at them. Metro Tech. Don't think financial aid will pay for that. Maybe health care. Back problems.

Trying to figure out how I'm going to handle all this.

I'D LIKE TO BE INVOLVED IN THAT CONVERSATION.

21:45 I need to figure what to go with.

22:43 (sigh) She talked about growth in technology. I'm pretty comfortable with technology. Except reading that book about technology. Kinda got me hung like a hung jury. . . . These questions on here. Artifacts before and after. I'm looking at 'em like, really? It's difficult in my mind. . . . kinda gheto-looking. It's tacky. It's tacky.

### **Interview2.3.greg.3.13**

9:51

Phip: So what classes are you going to take classes spring quarter if that's what you're thinking because you're gonna pass this course.

Greg: that if I pass this course I will probably come back and take another class but I guess the whole failing thing will play a big part of it because if you fail you have to pay them . . .

Phip: Yeah, that's not going to happen, I don't think.

Greg: . . . because that's something I can't afford to pay for school so I decided I would go down there and holler at them and see what else, I'm not quite sure what I'm gonna do I talk to them about Metrotech but it's kinda shaky to try to get into the field I'm trying to get in. I don't think financial aid will pay for it so I was thinking about the healthcare field. Might as well find something else that's not gonna beat me down in the long run--I've got a whole lot of back problems so I guess I'm just trying to figure out how I'm going to get all of this taken care of. I guess after spring break sometime.

[topic change]

Greg: . . . I used to be one of those hostile students like if I felt like I was criticized I would let you know like I didn't really care how people were, how they felt, I'm gonna speak my mind, I would blow gasket and like I would try to clear out the whole library, I was just that type of person.

But now growing up, looking back, seeing all my mistakes and things like that, seeing how far I've come, it just . . . I'm hungry for that change and I know I have changed a lot over the years since high school, but there's always room for more change. And coming here it just fills me up more. I don't know, I guess that's kinda why I figure I'm going to register for another class or something . . . I just feel like I need to make a correction from the bad experiences I did have in school . . . I just want to be able to turn all that around. School is a good thing. It's not all chopped up and critical like everyone says. I just want to have something good to talk about. Like, I don't know. Just . . . I just want to show a big positive throughout this whole experience. That anybody can do it.

Greg: You know what I'm saying . . . That's why I told you I have to be careful what I put on tape cause it can get me in trouble. Those are ju the opp I'm try to steer away fr bec there are too many statistics out here people going to the pen, going to prison for things, dieing out here, doing stupid things. There's too much of that going on out here. Just putting people as statistics in the books. I don't want to be a statistic. If there really ain't nothing out here to really be successful at other than working at BK or something else. So I need to find something that's outside of what's deterring me from all that.

Phip: Do you feel like you're kinda flying solo here? I mean, this is your path and are other people with you going down this path that you feel like you're sharing this experience with somebody or are you feeling like you're coming out of your neighborhood by yourself reaching out into college?

Greg: Man, it's always been flying solo. Everything I do I feel like I'm flying solo. So, like, doing this whole college thing I feel like I'm flying solo. But maybe one day

somebody will decide to jump on the team too.

Phip: But you have no friends that are like, 'Yeah, it's registration day let's go, let's go Greg.'

Greg. . . All my friends are like, 'What are you doing tonight? Let's get out here and party . . .'

YOU HAVE A HEAD OF MOMENTUM. A LOT. DOING A LOT OF GOOD WORK. . . . KEEPING IT GOING. I THINK THE BIGGEST THING IS JUST PERSEVERING. #1: PERSEVERENCE. YOU'RE HUNGRY.

I don't want to end up with a big head on my shoulders before I'm done. . . . The positive started to drop off, watching my grades fluctuate. I feel better about it.

KIND OF LESSONS OF GETTING THROUGH:

I learned is be a soldier about it. You start something you finish it. And that's something I never really did that. I backed away. Now I look like I'm halfway through it and it shows me that I can do it.

YOU HAD SOMETHING BAD HAPPEN DURING THIS QUARTER, RIGHT BEFORE THE QUARTER, LEARNED THAT IT'S GOING TO CHANGE YOUR CAREER PLAN. DEVASTATING TO PLAN, SO YOU TOOK A GUT CHECK RIGHT THERE.

Pretty much. Before I came to school, this whole trucking thing, that's what my heart was, threw me out there. I walked around with a chicken with my head cut off trying to figure things out. . . . Everything becomes clearer.

Looking back, it's a learning lesson. It bothers me. That's life. I'm trying to move on. That's why I tried to talk to ol' boy about some new classes. Need a backup plan. . . . The way things are, the way the economy is . . . it's not always the best way. There's too many statistics being out there in the streets. Recruiting more people to become that statistic.

6:30 When you ain't successful in a career, you have a tendency to do things, regardless whether they're legal or illegal. I could reach out and touch every one of them. And they're all bad. I have to be careful what I put on tape. What I'm trying to steer away from. Going to the Pen. . . . Statistics. I don't want to be a statistic.

7:15 Black population. Forget about school, what's actually important. Don't think about long term, spur of the moment. At least I don't want to be spur of the moment.

FLYING SOLO HERE?

Everything I do I feel like I'm flying solo. Maybe some day someone's going to jump on the team too.

All my friends are like . . . none of my friends are educational bound. Why you going to school? Not going to pay off? I know people who are still trying to find jobs . . . It ain't even worth it. You need to be out here getting the money like the rest of us. Need to kick that crowd to the curb.

5-10 years. Figure out who I'm going to be. That's what I need. . . . I just try. If I have to leave town to do, I have to leave. . . . But I'm pushing for it.

**Capstone1.greg3.15.13** 4:27

Practice:

Omaha: 24<sup>th</sup> & Lake. 2 years. Move us for a better living.

**Capstone2.greg3.15.13** 24:07 TOTAL: 4 hours 45 minutes (appx)

Practice:

My whole goal, coming back to school, either go to the streets or come to school. Truck D, living for.

You get it how you get it with me . . . changed that up.

3:40 I ain't no writer or nothing like that.

5:00 You do it better than me; you should be up here. NO COMMENT: I KEEP TALKING.

5:45 Some people like to word jack . . . 7:30

Idea shift . . . . [10:00...]

11:00 READING, skimming through. But you ain't going to understand so you go to the annotation. Started highlighting and underlining things so I know exactly what my points are in what I'm reading. . . sidenotes on the side, in my own words. Also helps you to put things together. Could write a summary.

14:45 academic resources: holler at your advisor, go over assignments.

18:00 MLA

Flash drive use.

PostCapstone.greg3.26

6:25

Kind of excited. Did my test. My PPt presentation. Went pretty good. I don't know. It was kind of a good experience. Better than I thought. I don't know. I guess, I'm hoping I got a good grade at least with a B. The most of what I've ever passed, especially an English class. I don't know. It's cool. As to the next quarter, I'm not quite sure how everything's going to shake out. I've been doing some little bit of looking into going to Metro Tech for this heavy maching thing. It seems like I'm prob going to have a a lot of obstacles to overcome to get in. I'll just have to take it one step at a time, see if I have something else to fall back on. Coming into this quarter, I'm kind of worried about it. I'm not very good at math at all because I always seem to fail, have a hard time, difficulties with. I can add and subtract just fine, but comes to multiplation and division I struggle. Yeah, I know this is going to be a real stressful exeprience I'm going to go ahead and hit it with full force and see what comes from it, what I make of it. As for accelerated, I don't think I can do that, too fast paced and too overwhelming. I don't want to set myself up to fail. I'd at leasdt like to come back the next quarter and try to become someobdy and do something and with this math sitting ahead, kinda dims out my forecast. But it's alright though. I have to ue all the resources I can get, use some tuttoring, mess with the smarthinking more, rather than going facing the tutor one on one. I can just imagine he's got more people to help. And I kinda need that one on one when it comes to this math but I'll make it work one way or another. Kinda counting on this.

Other than that, things going pretty good. Spring break. It's all right. I look forward to it. Finally get a break. Get back to school, see what new classes I get. Who I can link up with. Yeah. As for me exiting my last class, I'm going to miss it. 3-4 people. I think it was the right size class. ... staying more focus. Kinda got lucky on that one. We'll see how the other one goes.

Springbreak.greg4.2.13

24:29

Chilly spring break. Sit at the park. Watch those old jobs truck run up down Interstate 180; I'm always k of curious every time what they're doing, figure out where they're working. Don't know. Have to figure out something different. Just let all that go.

The quarter's finally started. Got registered for classes. Composition and math. Composition – I'm positive I can pass through. The teacher, he's something else. I kind of don't really care for him, but like I said I'm just \*\*\* doing what I've got to do. Math teacher cool. Kind of got an issue with some of the people off the streets. Kind of caught me off guard seeing who's up in

there. Throws me off a little. Other than that. Just things alright I guess. I k of get the impression at the crib, I don't know how I'm gonn asqueeze together going to school and finding employment. Most likely have to find me a fulltime job. Kind of situation where I kinda have to make a choice now. Kinda got get on my own feet. End up having to cut my classes or whatever. And I don't even want to do that. Backed into a situation, a thing like that. You have to give things up. (helicopter, military) But yeah, other than that. I finished up my quarter things are pretty good. Kinda wished I had a little class like I had last quarter. When things went smoothly. Kinda stressful after being out of class for so many years so we'll see how the rest of these go. AT the beginning of class man it's always kind of nerve-wracking. I was hoping to be able to get through this. Hoping to figure out this whole employment thing and gete my things together. I just have a whole lot on my mind 24/7. Other than that, man, I'm just chilling. Trying to get some time away from everybody. Just to sit back and think. . . . 4:15

One of the good spots I can come chill and relax. I'm an outdoor person. I like to enjoy parks. Get out and go for walks. I don't know. During time when I'm not out...get my alone time and really focus and thigns like that. Nobody perfect. Reason I got to focus and things like that the life I live it's all messed up. I got to get on my feet. Do something. Yeah, April Fools. The holiday crept up on me, I didn't even know it was AF until everybody in school, like the English teacher, one good thing he did, fooled us. Syllabus. You can bring cameras. You can listen to music. ... don't' even worry about assignments . . . Are you serious? We can bring our headphones? Facebook, man? It was cool, though.

It was straight though. That was a nice little April Fools joke.

I kinda just get distracted watching the trucks go up and down the highway, always be thinking . . . I kinda got a curious mind for everything. I don't know. I just be kinda thinking about studpid things. Just look around, man, like if this whole park was your land. What would you do with it. . . I would do all types of things. ... Throw a couple of shops up, some kind of entertainment, give this town something to do. I don't know. I been here in Lincoln so long, a little over e15 years. I ain't really ever been someplace else. Hastings. Letft that out . . . I really ain't never been outside the state. Been to Iowa twice. Been to Missouri a few times. Been to Wyoming once, during the nighttime. Really didn't get to see anything. I don't know. All I know is Nebraska, aman, when you feel like you been here too long you kinda go crazy and I feel like I've been here too long. I have to branch out and find something else out. . . . White collar. .. Watching RT news, 87% of college grads still working minimum wage jobs . . . 9:45

This whole college thing is kinda alarming . . president slowing this economy down. I been listenging to him to. Makes you kinda wonder . . Student loan . . . jobs going overseas . . . there really ain't no opportunity over here no more . . we're a declining superpower, . . . all this money we owe to China.

11:30 politics 12:30 looking like Detroit, Flint MI . . . going to war with all these country's for all these reasons. . . . WMD . . . 15:11 US aggression around the world. . . . Why we're the #1 hated country.

We're worried about everything on around the world but not here.

15:35 I know nobody in Nebraska ain't nobody worried.

16:30 pre-Martial Law. 17:00 Obama trying to carry out his daddy's dreams. Working pretty well. Signed indefinite detention act. Whistle blowers. Journalists. All that. Made that all a felony. Automatic felony. Our liberties. Our freedom. 18:30 Whole gun ban thing, my whole opinion Obama doing that for China. Obama trying to disarm us because China want to come reclaim their debt. . . China wants us disarmed. Gun behind every blade of grass. ... Game over if they disarm us. . . . China building a city in Idaho. 20:00

I be looking around and I be wondering. Everybody wanted him to be president so they could keep getting their welfare checks, their foodstamps. . . . We don't need government. . . He wanted all of us Americans on foodstamps, be more dependent on government. Control over us. ... Obama care: fine. Tax us. 23:30

\$900 for first fine. Add 6 percent on top of that. Felony if you don't pay.

#### **Interview.Trust .4.11** 15:52

Math class would be the prime example. People are just so distant. Sit kind of right next to one another but when it came to the black population like they have some kind of conflict. Uneasy. Which happens in the neighborhood. ... confines to cliques, groups. Really not trying to interact . . . like they're bringing that from the neighborhood. Anti-social. Instead of trying to reach out, meet someone half way. Like when I was sitting there. I had to think of ways to kind of break the ice. Similar last names. Trying to buddy up with someone.

I'm thinking when it comes to me it's more of a comfort level. . . . Always that distant. Always feel like you're being judged. Worried about what other people are thinking . . . at SCC I noticed the people here, the teachers and administrators, making everybody feel comfortable. . . . Use my resources to try to succeed. Don't have to hesitate. Pretty much about the environment. First appearance people want to judge. Walk in the room people want to perceive me as a bad guy, like a gang banger. But in reality I'm not that person. The only way they have to try to get to know me. . . Everybody should come together like in other cultures. . . Laila, they battle for each other. I wish we did, battle for each other, support each other. . . They band together, other cultures . . . I get kind of the attitude they project, . . . who wants to stand out, be at the top, compete to see who gets to the top, and see who they can step on to see who can get there but nobody trying to work together.

A combination of feeling and seeing it. . . For example, I used to try to buddy up and get some help but as soon as you get a good grade, as soon as they present it, you are beneath them, crush you. We all need to come up with the same kind of game plan so we can all succeed. 8:40 . . . I understand society already kicks us down for some things but we shouldn't be adding to it. . . Whatever's going on out there shouldn't be brought here. It should be a whole new level.

TRUST OR UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN YOU AND ME: If you feel like you can really trust me because although I feel like I reach out to you I wonder if Greg really knows he can trust me. Older. Part of an institution.

When I look out our culture, we have a trust issue. The way they perceive us automatically. When people get out here, smile in your face, pump you up, get you all comfortable, and then doing the complete opposite. Being in class and you're the only black person, even though it's not obvious, almost like a tension vibe. A secret level, somewhat of a little bit of race. Other races are usually against us, we kind of have this crazy messed up attitude, kind of rejecting that same thing and it shouldn't be like that. But trust is something you have to slowly build because a lot of people be like that fake stuff, they falsify and it's a hard thing to separate and grasp. . . It's all about the thinking in the mindset. It has to start from that and build from that.

## **Images.from.home.5.2**

15:58

Brother, welder at Kawasaki, 8 years older, different dad. Kind of got that country thing. Fascinated with hunting. Quite successful with what he do.

This is a picture of me, back in 90, 91 before we moved here to Lincoln, over in Omaha on Lake street. A picture my mother had drew. She's quite the artist. I wish I had talent like she do. Hung up in the living room.

That right there is a bird that we used to have. Back then, back in the day in my younger years, my mother like to keep birds around, she's got some white doves too.

Here's the house in Lincoln I spent most of my years at. A lot of memories in this house. Lived in this house for 6 years. 95-01. Moved out of this house my like my 7<sup>th</sup> grade year in Culler Middle School.

This is our pet cat we used to have. She used to be quite the character. Gigi. Recently passed away from liver failure. Quite devastating to my mother. I guess that's life and that's how it goes. Rest in peace.

This is my nephew. I think that was Tristan, like in 2005. Funny little thing. A happy little kid. I'm thinking he's like 8, 9 years old now.

This is my mother. My wonderful \_\_ mother. My uncle. My mother's birthday or Christmas. Can't remember. Thinking this is 2007.



This is an old picture from the 90s, out there with the alligator snapping turtle at sunken gardens, I'm thinking.

This is my grandmother and mother at one of the thanksgivings, I think a few years ago. Can't think what all to say about that one.

This is back behind that one house behind that one house I was telling you we spent most of the time. This is my mother holding one of the alligator snapping turtles. Back in the days. My brother was fascinating by them.

This was one of our animals. I think her name was mitz mats. She was a crazy dog. Mix rotweiler and dobberman. She was real cool.

This is a picture my mother had took of some tree. I think that was in my grandmother's apart where my grandmother stays at.

This is the old car I used to own. My 99 dodge itnrepid. Coming out of high school I saved every money. . . .Once I got that I thought that I was bad. I had a lot of good memories with that car. A lot of good memories. Lost that car to Car Hop. . . Ended up stealing it because when . . . a long, crazy, screwed up story.

My mother back in like 2004 when we used to work at the fair grounds with the Africans. They used to hook us up with discounts.

This is a picture of sunken gardens before they redid it.

Another picture of my mother . . . My mother was quite slim back then.

Youngest nephew Tristan. Quite the character. A football type. . . . The boy's got skill. He's like a hunter. 6, 7. A boy scout.

My aunt rosemary. Must've caught her at the wrong time. My auntie. In Omaha.

Another picture my mother had took. Hanging up at my grandmother's apartment buidling.

My mother and her friend Hariet.

This is my mother andmy nephew. I think that was my nephew Tremain. This is my boy too. I think he was a year old in that picture. A year, year and ahlf. Two.

That's my boy tristan. I think that was in 2008. The year he was born.

That's the dog that we had. Dressed him up for Halloween. Put the bunny ears on him. Well trained. Lovable. I miss that dog a lot. Mitz Matz. Ended up having to give him to the pound when things started going down hill. In the cycle of the struggle. Yeah, some nice memories.

My mother picture from Halloween.

A dog sniffing on the bird.

A picture of my mother, I think back in Hastings Nebraska. One of her childhood pictures.

A picture of my grandmother. Early . . . She's like 80, 85. Still kicking. She's always been there. Got that good cooking. Helped raise me and my brother. Helped keep me in line.

This is my . . my mom down at the Salt Creek dam. 95, 96.

My mom again at the fair.

This is my brother and the neighbor kids. 2004 2005.

There goes me and my nephew holding him. This is what I looked like back in high school. This was my senior year when I had braids and I wasn't bald headed.

This is my mother's car. I still got that car. Got that the same time I had my Intrepid.

Bird.

There goes . . .can't remember . . . my mama.

White doves I was talking about.

A statues.

All the pictures I have left. All the memories I have. We lost all of our pictures in storage and in the time I was being homeless. I don't know. This is just all I got. . . . Outside of the little pictures I take on my cell phone. That's it. You know. Sometimes it's hard without pictures. Hard to describe. I guess. All this is better than nothing. It's better than nothing.

## **Xroads.math.5.8**

26:00

TALKED ABOUT MAKING A MATH PLAN. CAN WE DO THAT?

I worked on a couple times a week for 30 minutes to an hour. Pretty much all I can come up with.

If I can make it that far. Mid-terms are already going in and I'm sitting still sitting on a zero. . . . I'm just not feeling it. Staring at the book trying to work the problems. I know if I go up and talk to him got to do it all over again . . . that whole math thing is just not me at all.

It's tough and it's really intimidating. You just kind of freeze. Try to get help. Gotta go back and re-do that. Everybody else is testing out. I'll drop the class before I'm the last one in there. I got so many mixed thoughts about this whole math thing. I don't know.

UNPACK MIXED THOUGHTS ABOUT IT . . .

People just be looking, you always get that feeling, how you're perceived. Or anybody else who's struggling. They always think negative about them. I don't know. Like me being off in

class. Black dude in class. People be saying we ain't smart enough. People are uneducated. I'm sitting off around by all bunch of people who are educated . . . I either got to do something or raise up out of the situation. I know the stereotype out there . . . It's something that's obvious. I'm not the kind of person . . . Basically the view that you get.

Sometimes me and another student having a conversation earlier today, the teacher's Muslim. I'm the only minority in there. The cowboy is smiling and laughing. And when I go to say something like and he twists it in such a way, and the cowboy is laughing. Cut somebody down in a round about way. But you gotta try to overlook that.

In math, the teacher is cool. He's there to do his little tutor thing. I don't really have an issue. . . .

It aint' his fault. It's obviously not his fault. It's just what I was thrown into. #

MATH PLAN: TURN THE CORNER ON MAKING PROGRESS, THAT'S ALL MONEY IN YOUR BANK.

The whole debt thing. Wracked up \$5K already. Within a 2month period. I know they're going to come after me for all this. That's another thing that's eating at me. Don't know if I should stick with it. Hitting me with the interest. Going higher and higher. After being through with it . . . that my checks are already being garnished. Already forking out hundreds to dept of transportation to try to be . . . it's all financial a lot of times that's getting at me. Losing focus on this whole school thing. I notice that though. . . . So it makes it difficult. It really do.

Twist my hours. They ain't really trying to do that. But I need full time. I was going to get a little part time job at Taco Bell but not really trying to be lenient. But supervisors aren't trying to be lenient. I have other obligations . . .

AMIGOS . . .

14:00

\$200 scholarship hardly put a dent . . . . Those loans are going to kill me.

ACTIVATE THE PLAN: Why don't you go to the tutoring center. You all make it look so easy. I'm still stuck on the same thing. Kinda give me a little courage. I know I need to do something. I got to do something.

First chapter. Fractions. Decimals. I ain't never done that. I sound crazy.

I'm trying to get the hell out of there. 17:30. Another thing that's eating me out. I'm helping her get by. I need to get out and find something stable. Got to fly the coop. It's nerve wracking.

I went to court yesterday . . about to get railroaded. I'm going to get railroaded on this one. I think they'er going to snatch my license from me. Like I told the judge . . I was guilty for some of them. I'm not going to play the innocent role . . . but the circumstances I can't take

responsibility for that. How your officers got me. . . . But it's worth a shot and they never gave me no public defender. 19:00

What a helluva life. Lincoln's sucking me dry. One way or another. It's rough. It's rough.

20:20 I love coming to school. Every day even though I don't go to math class. I like the environment. Get up in there. Get the motivation. And when you do something good and get recognized for it it makes you feel good. Like an addiction. . . I recognize those.

**Office.interview.6.7** 9:30

Too much ruckus. One homey got hurt . . . . working 6-7 days a week. Decided not to go into work today. They don't supply with you gloves. Safety glasses and a hard hat.

A lot of people got hurt. You know. It's just too much. I can do the work. The work ain't nothing. Playing with people's money, people's safety.

. . . I kinda wonder what it's all for but . . . you got a cool family. Oughta open a restaurant.

**Interview.6.10** 3:24

Welding class . . . Comp I class fluctuating b/Ow B & D, but either way should be passing. Other essay you scanned for me, I got an A on that. . . I finished it up, I'm proud of it.

**Interview.6.18** 11:24

So much is going, feels like I'm losing everything. All these things I'm plagued with. Feel like I want to run from my problems. I want to get through school to find something stable, but also need to branch out and find something else. Lost my license. Had to give up my vehicle to keep the state. I basically had to give up my car for free . . . pretty much have to give everything up. First take my license. Take my job. Pay these fines. I might've been in the wrong for some of it. . . End up in the street. Getting knocked backward. 5 years of this is too long.

Try to find some type of happiness one way or other.

How much of a chance am I allowed . . get a taste of it, possibilities, what it could be . . . and it's all stripped away from me. Gets kinda hard. It gets kinda devastating.

When you want something real bad, work real hard, have the gov't, you can't have it, push you down and carrying your whole life with you. I got a real good mind to holler at internal affairs . . . speak your mind and be able to move on. Like when I went to court. Tried to tell the judge my issue and the judge kinda laughed at my face in the courtroom. I kinda wanted to lose my cool. Coulda given me jail time but he didn't.

I'm not any criminal activity. Everybody does some petty stuff. Could be worse. I'm not that guy.

I rode the bus. Get back and forth with that. It just makes it difficult. Hampers my effort to even find employment. Want IDs, and I missed out on a job already because of that. It ain't all new to me. It just gets old after a while. You just get drained. I just know, coming to school.

I know the gov't still going to come after their money. Doing their calculations. 3 months: \$5K in loans. I'm looking at like, man, where I'm going to come after my money. I'm already getting my checks garnished by the hospital.

Ended up giving it all to the government to stay out of jail.

If I can find scholarships to find some type of leeway. I always keep it in the back of my mind. You'll never be anybody without that education. I see people watching. I feel like I've got something to uphold with this whole school thing. I see you, I see your wife . . .

Video Reflection Transcript: Phip

L.phip.reflection.2.18

Phip's video-journal

I was getting ready to go home and it's February 18 at 3:12 in the afternoon. Greg called me this morning and asked if, just to let me know he wasn't gonna make it to school today, and he was having trouble with transportation and I said I have already taught today, I said, if you need a ride give me a call back. He wasn't sure if his mother would be there, back with the car. I said I would come and get him if he needs a ride and gave him my cell phone number and I went ... then he called me maybe 15 minutes later about a little before noon and gave me his address and I met him at the Walgreens the

27th and Vine streets which is just about 3 miles west of here. I called and when I got there and he popped out and came down the alley. We talked about politics a little bit I have the radio on and I was a little surprised by his . . . I got to learn something out I don't know if I was surprised . . . I think I might've been. He says he gets his information from a couple sources I've never heard of freshened TV sounded like a radio host out of Texas and have some criticisms of the current president of his politics and maneuverings so that kind of surprised me that a person who's Black and young who is suspicious of a black president the first black president this country not what I would hope but not necessarily something I would necessarily not suspect.

I probably have made assumptions and not thought about them though. I did offer and asked him if he had lunch and he said not really but he would be fine so I did not push that point. What else . . . I did share some of my views not really specific I didn't say I would favor the president on most issues as opposed to . . . against those who would oppose him

I am in favor of Obama but not without criticism also. And he expressed a conspiracy theory. He believes that in 2016 the United States is going down, going down and by 2016 he said it might be gone. That was a surprise and the move to take guns from people is connected to China and that they will end up coming here and we won't have guns to defend ourselves. That's how I understood it anyway.

He came back after class today, they got out of class early he was in a good mood. He got a good grade on an annotating assignment and they just have to read and annotate for Wednesday and so he's excited about that no worksheets just doing what, uh, what he's interested in annotating looking for information so I think that's great because he worked he was really stressed out last week about his paper. I had spent time with him on his last paper, specifically, he wrote a than narrative basically and had to tie quotes into it. And I tried to suggest a quote that he and I had discussed before RWE, the thing is in the saddle and it rides mankind, and how you reflect on that and connect that quote to his story of learning how to use a computer and I thought about that maybe he had not much practice reflecting, taking a quote and making it meaningful to him. He's not happy with the book, he was really not happy with the book last week, tasked with making meaning from the book, from a book that he does not feel has any connection to his life. The book called *The Shallows: How the Internet is influencing us* by Nicholas Carr so I had given him the quote and tried to get him down the path of reflecting to see if he would pick that up and how his learning a computer might be influencing, riding, shaping people's behavior after you learn how to use it, or or other things like the computer, if he's seen video games. He seemed to know what I was saying but when it came to writing that and playing with it as a thought got very frustrated. He invested a lot of time on that. I have not seen his paper.

Listening to the radio on the way back from lunch, after dropping Greg off, I was listening to Harry Belafonte give a speech, an acceptance speech, for an award he just

accepted and he had talked about radical voice, the need for a radical voice and I'm thinking about my move, which was to go, my offer to go get Greg, may be considered radical and it's such an obvious thing that anybody would do for a friend, obviously a family member, but a professional a professional teacher to go get a student and bring them to school is breaking clearly a written or unwritten rule. It may be written someplace I don't know but at least it's . . . you are crossing a personal, uh, outside of school, space where people feel vulnerable in the established relationship of what, how we treat each other is confused and so that is a dangerous, if you want to consider it radical, if I'm trying to elevate my behavior to what Harry Belafonte might be suggesting about needing to talk the voice and I am thinking as a thought that, yes, that is a radical action. Could it be care if I want it to be or as an example, right, of my wanting to get to, talk about it on camera, even though I will claim I am not, would be doing this if I was not doing the research would I do that. I would think about it, I don't know if I would've acted on it. Who's to say, but the point here is, I think, the thought of do we need to question what it is to the relationship of teacher to student. Is it time to consider the broader context beyond the classroom walls as space where a teacher can, uh, be a human being with, toward, alongside, students in . . . a way that may or may not have been considered in a discussion of research. I'm not saying teachers haven't done this and do it, they're just not typically tasked with it and it's a scary thing. I would contrast this experience with my first year of teaching in . . . 1992 or 93 teaching high school and I . . . yeah, I pause here in case I want to edit this out. [chuckle] I went out to lunch with high school students. I got in the back s of a hs student car and went thru the dt at w's and came back. Now I don't think that is radical, as a younger teacher, mid-20s with 18, 17 year-old students, uh, that's . . . I would say not professional. If I was driving, would that make any difference, no. I would just say that that's different maturity wise than this day.

Yeah.

So the question of whether I can reflect with my voice on camera in a meaning making, personal meaning-making way as opposed to text. So I'm putting myself, I'm not, obviously, I've not done this before, and I'd rather be writing but this is easier in some ways but I'd have limited control over it. And this is what Greg is doing to some extent, I think, so I think he and I are on equal playing field with the technology, and I think that's good. I cannot really put myself or take control of the narrative because, frankly, I don't think I have the skill to do that, even accidentally. His voice should stand up against mine, stronger, even stronger.

He's gonna come back, uh, Wednesday. So the fact that my research participant is not maybe a liberal, um, is maybe an uneasy surprise. So that's an assumption that's been turned back on me, I'll be thinking about. Does that change how I treat him any differently. . . . that's ridiculous.